
TAKEN IN HAND

2003-2013

VOLUME II

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**"MY HUSBAND'S CALM CONTROL MAKES
ME FEEL SUBMISSIVE" (1 JANUARY 2005)**

My husband and I had been together for 22 years (on and off), before we got around to this kind of relationship. It has made a big difference to our lives, but not because of spanking. That was something we had been doing anyway. My husband had been spanking me all that time without it making me happier, sweeter, or more obedient (except on a very temporary basis). This is why I am slightly surprised by articles that suggest that spanking a woman can make an enormous difference to her attitude etc, because this was not the case with me. It required a sort of mental adjustment that was about more than spanking.

Spanking is an important part of our sexual and emotional life, and I certainly would hate to do without it, but it is not the thing that has made the big difference to my relationship with my husband, it is a change of mind that has brought about the change in our marriage. I seem to be sexually turned on all the time these days too. It's nice, but spanking isn't what has done it.

It's about being willing submit. I love feeling submissive, but it's a feeling I only ever had spasmodically until recently. I didn't know it was possible to have it as a (mostly) permanent feeling.

It wasn't because my husband wasn't assertive enough. He can, as I've said elsewhere, be assertive enough for ten, he just never went about it in the right way. It wasn't that he was unwilling to take the

lead, just that I always resisted his attempts at leadership.

With me, the big difference was finding that he is able to control himself, and therefore can control me. Last night, for instance, in a tense PMT mood, I snarled at him about something, and waited for him to lose his temper and snarl back, thereby feeding my anger, as he would have done in the past.

Instead, he just looked at me, smiled slightly and said, "We'll talk about your little outburst later" ("talking" being a euphemism for him taking me out to his workshop and walloping the living daylight out of me). Instantly, my anger ebbed away to be replaced by that incredible mixture of anticipation, apprehension and arousal (the AAA effect), that I always feel in this situation.

It's not the threat of the spanking in itself that does it, though that of course is important, the major turn-on is the fact that with a word he can eliminate the anger and restore the "s" feeling!¹

**"LINGUISTICALLY SUBMISSIVE" (3
JANUARY 2005)**

Frequently I am perplexed by the suggestion that a submissive person is, somehow, a lesser person, or a weaker person, or a person who is less than fully developed in their personality. Exactly how this idea came about I have no idea but I wonder if perhaps there was some moment in the tortured history of the vernacular that a simple minded person couldn't distinguish between

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submissive, subservient, subordinate, and substandard and muddled up their adjectives. Another possibility is that many people have got into the habit of applying one-word labels to themselves and to other people and since we are all complex creatures it is inevitable that those labels are going diminish in usefulness as more people employ them.

All of this might be of no importance except that it also seems to me that as the result of this linguistic confusion no small number of people who find so-called submissive inclinations within themselves and express them, are then accosted because they don't conform to some standard of aspiration or behaviour that has unknown origins and very little authority beyond being fashionable. Others seem to be lambasted with accusations of inferiority and are then tormented by assorted self doubts about their own motives, worth and mental stability.

On a slightly different track I've encountered several discussions that, to me, seemed to be proceeding completely awry because the participating persons were using the same word to mean quite different things. This article is principally about words.

Before I get any further I'd like to apologise in advance for any of the following that sounds like a lecture from somebody who thinks they've got the definitive opinion on a subject; one day I might learn to write in a more relaxed style but, in the meantime, my attempts at unambiguous and meaningful correspondence do tend to come across rather like the classroom notes from a pat-

ronising and bumbling professor of the old school. I'd especially like to apologise to any linguists, grammarians, etymologists or other skilled wordsmiths for whom my clumsy and imprecise attempts to clarify the use of language will possibly be experienced as a form of verbal torture. When I finally get to heaven I will no doubt be made aware of all of my errors and have the rest of eternity in which to find them funny but, for now and for whatever it is worth, here is my take on submit, submissive and submission. Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin.

Although there is nothing grammatically wrong with the statement "I submit", it isn't a complete description of the process and rather invites the questions "What do you submit, and to what (or to whom) are you submitting it?" In linguistic terms, we could contrast running, eating and submitting to see that they are slightly different:

Linguistically, running is an action that can be wholly self-contained and thus the statement "I run" is essentially complete. Eating is an action that you apply to something else and hence the statement "I eat" is not essentially complete because the object of the action is missing. The statement "I eat chocolate" is essentially complete because it includes the object (chocolate) of the action (eating) as well as the subject (I) that is performing the action.

Submitting is an action that requires two objects which are known, if I understood properly, as the direct object and the indirect object. So, for example, the statement "I submit the report to my client" is a

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complete because it has the action (submitting) that is being performed, the subject (I) which is performing the action, the direct object (the report) which is being submitted and the indirect object (the client) to which the report is being submitted. If you leave out any of the components then the statement diminishes in meaning.

Now since *Taken In Hand* is not, as far as I have seen, very concerned about reports or clients, let me try and make this relevant to those who are likely to be reading, namely men and women who are contemplating relationships in which the man takes a leadership role.

The first point that I think needs to be recognised is that within this context, submission is an action initiated by the submissive person and not something imposed upon them. Within this context one cannot ordinarily and meaningfully say, "I am being submitted" in the same way that one can say "I am being squashed" because submission is a state of activity not passivity, it is something you do, not something that is done to you. In the context of romantic relationships, submission originates from within while squashing originates from without.

In general terms we might say that the woman in a male-led relationship is submitting herself to her man but while this statement is meaningful to, and usefully understood by, some of the contributors to *Taken In Hand*, it isn't perhaps understood by those aforementioned simple souls who have muddled up their adjectives and think that the submissive woman is somehow degraded by

her submission, so let us analyse it in more depth.

Remember that the act of submission requires three components, namely that which is performing the submission, that which is being submitted and that to which it is being submitted. Within the context of a male-led relationship the subject is easy to define; it is the woman. The indirect object is also easy to define and it is the man in the relationship. The direct object is where things get more interesting ... what is it that the woman is submitting to the man?

The first way to answer to this question is to respond that she submits whatever she chooses to submit. This is important to grasp. Submission, remember, is a state of activity, not of passivity and hence is the result of a choice that the submissive person made. Submission is therefore totally unlike oppression: A submissive person gives something of their own volition while the oppressed person has something extracted from them contrary to their own desire. My submission is something I choose to give or withhold but oppression is something that somebody else does to me regardless of my preference or choice and that I would avoid if I could.

The second way to answer the question is to respond with another question, namely, what is it that the submissive woman has to offer? This also is extremely important to grasp because a woman cannot submit that which she does not herself possess because nobody can give what they haven't got. A woman in a male-led relationship can, if she chooses,

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submit to her man her talents, her energy, her material resources, and her body. I'll come back to what this means in a moment but, for now, we only need to see that if she has no energy and no talents and no resources then she cannot offer those things to her man which means she can only offer her body. Also, "talents" in this context does not just mean things like the ability to prepare a meal dinner, repair a broken window, organise an event, wash clothes, manage a household or children, or run a transnational corporation; it also includes talents such as patience, selflessness, kindness, tact, charm, a smile, empathy, the ability to hold an intelligent conversation and all the other dozens of personal qualities that can be used to make life better.

So, what does it mean to submit your resources, talents or energy to another person? In very simple terms it means that you allow the use of those resources, talents and energies to be directed or guided by the person to whom they are submitted.

This might involve explicit direction in the sense of an instruction being given and then obeyed or it might involve implicit direction, in the sense that the offeror uses their own understanding and prior knowledge to attempt to anticipate the needs or requirements of the receiver and to meet those needs and requirements without any explicit instruction being given.

Neither approach is right or wrong, better or worse because they are just two different methods each being more or less suitable for dif-

ferent situations. A parent, for example, will submit themselves to the needs of their young child and an employee will submit themselves to the requirements of their vocation and workplace, and, in each case, there could be both implicit and explicit direction from the child and from colleagues.

In the case of a male-led romantic relationship, the submissive woman will sometimes receive explicit directions from her man but far more often, she will work with the directions implied by the circumstances of their relationship and surroundings. In some relationships and situations the man and woman might feel more contented with a higher degree of explicit direction and in other relationships and situations the man and the woman might get along very nicely with only the directions implied by their shared circumstances. Since both circumstances and needs can and do change it follows that the methods will also have to adapt.

Because submission is something that I do (rather than something that is done to me) it can be easier or harder according to my talents and character and mood. It is relatively easy to submit to somebody who is appreciative and encouraging and when I give something that I enjoy giving but it is more difficult to submit to somebody who is negatively critical, harsh, unappreciative or selfish or when when I do not enjoy giving whatever it is that I give. However, "difficult" is not the same as "impossible". It is entirely possible for a woman to submit to a man who is a selfish and ignorant

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brute but few women could do so and even fewer would enjoy it. This leads us to another very important point, namely that in the most difficult situations only the strongest can submit and only the most noble of the strongest can take humble satisfaction in doing so.

By now it should, if I haven't waffled too much, be becoming clear to the simple-minded and adjectively challenged detractor, that submission, far from being a sign of weak character and mental deficiency, is actually a sign of strength and possibly even of virtue. The person who is most able to be submissive is, by definition, a highly competent, talented, person with a lot to give and the strength of character to do the giving even when circumstances are less than ideal. Most people simply are not capable of being very submissive either because they haven't bothered to develop any worthwhile talents or attributes of character, or because they are too full of their own pride and selfishness and egotism to be able to consistently give anything of value to anybody else.

With the foregoing in mind it will also, I hope, be increasingly obvious that not only is there no contradiction or paradox in the fact that intelligent, dynamic and competent women should want to be submissive but, on the contrary, that is exactly what one should expect because such women have much to give and the ability to see the desirability of giving it.

However, clarity might be further improved if I can manage to separate the "form" of submission from the "intent" of the submission. It is

possible (I really don't know) that much confusion arises because various behaviours or desires are labelled as "submissive" regardless of what attitude or desire underpins that behaviour or desire. So, for example, the act of receiving a spanking or other corporal punishment is often labelled submissive even when the woman being punished has deliberately provoked the punishment to satisfy her own self-centred desire for attention or erotic pain. By contrast another woman might be spanked because she has failed to obey some instruction or has displeased her man in some way. By further contrast another woman, having done nothing deserving punishment, might offer herself for physical chastisement because she sees that her man needs to release certain stress or tensions and will be able to do so by using her body in this way. Of these three, the third woman is being submissive as is the second. However in the first example, it is more likely that it is the man who is being submissive by responding favourably to the needs of his presently self-centred woman; he is submitting his talents and energy to meeting her desire or emotional need for attention and physical chastisement and it is her immediate need that is giving the direction to his actions.

Of course real life is never so simple and any attempt to comprehensively describe real life with mere words is almost certainly doomed to failure. Even in one event, the attitudes and desires of all three of the above scenarios could be intermingled or could follow one another as

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cause and effect. The woman who provoked a thrashing to satisfy her own desire for painful attention might, having had her need met and having had different emotions and hormones activated by the corporeal sensations, be filled with an overwhelming desire to do whatever it takes to please her man and thus her attitude could switch from being not at all submissive (when she was provoking the thrashing) to being very submissive (after the thrashing). In the same act, the man might submissively give his woman the thrashing she needs and desires and, through the act of doing so, be stimulated to use her body aggressively or demandingly or even selfishly to satisfy an erotic need that he didn't have before her stripped and striped stern came into view.

Thus the submissive role passes from the man to the woman and both are ultimately fulfilled. Note also that the fact that the man is being submissive by punishing the woman, does not mean that he does so reluctantly or feebly because submission is not the opposite of aggression or vigour, and submission is active not passive. If the true meaning of submission can be understood then there is no contradiction in him submitting to her by beating her bared backside briskly. Moreover, in the complexities of real lives, a person will oscillate in and out of submissiveness as they are affected by tiredness or stress or other emotional states and according to whether humility or selfishness has presently got the upper hand in the constant battles of the ego.

Personally, therefore, I don't find it very helpful to describe a person's *role* as submissive or not. Within any cohabiting relationship that is going to survive constructively for more than a day or two, both partners will submit to one another, but their submission will take different forms according to their individual needs and their combined circumstances. Consequently I do find it helpful to think of roles in terms of who provides the basic leadership in the relationship, who takes responsibility for what happens in the relationship and who, in the event of an unresolved disagreement, makes the final decision so that the two people can move on. In this view submission is not a role, but rather it is a set of attitude guided behaviours that can be used to enhance a role. In my idea of the ideal relationship, the man will for the most part lead and direct and the women will, for the most part, follow—those being what I think are usually (but not always) the most appropriate assignments for those particular two roles—but, according to my understanding of submission, they will both be more or less consistently submitting their talents and energies to one another for the benefit of themselves and their relationship.

In addition to all of the foregoing I think we do ourselves no favours by applying labels either to ourselves or to others. If I cannot be described by a handful of adjectives carelessly applied then how much less can I be meaningfully described by a single adjective?

Additionally, it seems to me that the popular use of certain words

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treats them as if they were opposites when in fact they describe entirely different things: The two that immediately come to mind in the context of this forum are “dominant” and “submissive”; even in simple usage these words do not occupy opposite ends of any spectrum because, as adjectives, they are generally used to add information about completely different aspects of a person's existence. In ordinary English, “submissive” describes a person's attitude while “dominant” describes their “presence” (think of how you would use the word to describe a flavour, feature, aroma or colour) and hence, if the words are used in their normal English sense rather than as forms of socio-sexual jargon, it is possible for a person to be simultaneously dominant and submissive.

Indeed it is possible for a person, lets say woman W, to be dominant, demure, submissive, compliant, and assertive all at the same time be-

cause dominant describes W's presence, submissive describes W's attitude, assertive is a description of the manner in which she conducts herself, compliant describes how she responds to particular specific requests and demure is not a comment about W at all, but a description of an observer's subjective perception of W.

The English language has a great many useful adjectives, including some that are subtle or obscure, but if we try and make one or two adjectives do the work of fifty of them then it is hardly surprising that we should find the chosen few hopelessly inadequate and our discussions crippled—especially when trying to describe something as complex as ourselves, our relationships and interactions. In the little table below I have tried to think of a few words that I consider to be often overused, underused or otherwise abused within discussions.

Adjective	Concepts that are strongly similar	Concepts that are strongly contrasting	Notes
Submissive	Giving, handing over, offering	Retentive (ie, refusing to give), passive.	In my opinion, this is the most abused word on the forum although a few people do seem to use it accurately. Perhaps the use of this word and its relatives (submit, submission) should be forbidden for a week or two to force everybody to think more carefully about what they really mean and to encourage the use of a thesaurus! Proud people will find that

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			their ego hinders their submission while talentless people have nothing to submit.
Dominant	Pre-eminent, most noticeable, conspicuous.	Secondary, subordinate, inconspicuous.	Dominance is always defined relative to something else. Dominant doesn't really have an opposite because it has a complement, namely that which is dominated. The concept of dominance is easily understood by thinking of dominant flavours, dominant colours, etc.
Assertive	Making application of effort, making ones requests clearly known, forceful.	Passive, idle.	Assertiveness might or might not lead to dominance: A tadpole might assert itself in fleeing the minnow (a type of fish) and the minnow might make very little effort at all, but the idle minnow will still likely be dominant over the assertive tadpole.
Passive	Going with the flow, unresisting, making no effort.	Assertive, resisting, submissive	
Controlling	Being in control, having things occur according to your will.	Being out of control, being ineffective in attaining your own goals.	Controlling is not synonymous with leading but they might at times overlap. Like dominant, controlling has a complement, rather than an opposite and is understood by reference to that which is controlled.
Aggressive	forceful	gentle	Defined perhaps as assertive plus shades of anger or violence?
Leading	?	following	Not synonymous with either controlling or directing

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			although it might overlap with both.
Forceful	assertive	gentle, passive	
Yielding	giving when challenged.	Resisting	Not synonymous with submissive.
Decisive	?	Procrastination	

None of the preceding notes are intended to be definitive but I hope that they will help and encourage people to clarify their thoughts and find words that are more precise when describing their ideas. That isn't always easy because language changes with use and even thesauri don't always agree.

Several women have indicated that they feel uncomfortable describing themselves as submissive but I hope that my attempt at an explanation will help people see that, if we stick with the non-specialised use of the English language, there is no contradiction in describing oneself as, for example, an assertive, competent, dominant and submissive person. However because each adjective will not necessarily apply to every situation the person encounters nor to every role that a person performs even this list of adjectives is likely to be misleading unless it is qualified with descriptions of the situations in which each applies.

Near the beginning of this article I did apologise for possibly having the writing style of a patronising professor but now, for those who'd like a challenge, here is some suggested homework: Choose one of the

following titles and *without using any of the words: submit, submitted, submitting, submissive and submission (or any derivatives thereof)* create and submit an article suitable for publication on Taken In Hand.

1. Giving examples where appropriate, discuss the significance and relative importance to a woman of the qualities of decisiveness and circumspection in partner or prospective partner.
2. Giving examples where appropriate, discuss the significance and relative importance to a man of the qualities of compliance and respectfulness in his partner or prospective partner.
3. It is impossible for a woman to be simultaneously sexually aggressive and sexually subordinate; discuss.
4. Identify five qualities of character that make a man suitable for a Taken In Hand relationship and contrast them with five qualities that would make a man unsuitable for a Taken In Hand relationship.
5. Using examples from real life to illustrate your discussion, and with particular reference to sexual violence *within the context of a Taken In Hand style of relationship*, discuss whether and why a

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person's emotions follow their actions or a person's actions follow their emotions. (Please do not answer this question if you do not understand what is meant by a "Taken In Hand style of relationship".)

6. With reference to a Taken In Hand relationship (or some particular aspect of one), describe three modes of leadership and their relevance, and identify the roles of those involved.
7. Using examples from real life to support your argument, discuss the proposal that the qualities of Assertiveness, Bravery, Control and Dominance form the initial components in the formation of a successful Taken In Hand relationship.

If you like the idea of this challenge, please keep the following in mind:

- There are no correct or incorrect answers.
- Points will be awarded for precise use of terminology, constructive content, humour, originality and any evidence that a dictionary or thesaurus has been consulted.*
- Points will be deducted for lack of clarity, for using any use of the words: submit, submitted, submitting, submissive and submission (or any derivative thereof), or for offending against any of the contributors' guidelines.
- Articles will be judged by whoever reads them and the decision of the judges will most certainly not be final or binding on any person in any way and may

be reviewed on appeal at any time by submitting another article.

- Needless to say there are no prizes to be had beyond the loving appreciation of your readers and the glory of participating.

[...]

To summarise: I consider submissiveness to be an attitude that leads to a course of action chosen and performed by the submissive person and it is something that is done best by those with much to give. Exactly what a submissive person submits will depend on what personal skills and qualities that person has developed and which of these they choose to offer. Within any constructive relationship both partners will submit to one another but the process of submission does not define the substance or form of the submission and hence, for example, it is entirely possible for a woman to be submissive by receiving a punishment from her man and for a man to be submissive by giving his woman a punishment that she needs or desires. Alternatively a man could submit his energy and talents to his wife by taking the leadership role and she could submit her talents and energy to him by accepting and following his leadership. Since submission is the practical outworking of a choice, it follows that strong, competent, capable people submit, not because they are forced to do so (which would in any case be a contradiction in terms) but because they can. By contrast self-centred or talentless people are not submissive because they are simply incapable of it. There is nothing weak or degrading about a person

*[hint, <http://www.reference.com/>]

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choosing to allow their talents and energies to be directed by somebody else but, on the contrary, such submission is a generous and powerful gift but also a gift which only the strong and virtuous can give consistently.²

"A CONSENSUAL, NON-CONTROLLING JOURNEY" (5 JANUARY 2005)

To me, being Taken In Hand means that I am willingly giving up control of part, or even all, of myself, to be under the authority (not control) of my husband. It is my choice to do so, and if things became intolerable, I would take back that choice, which is why my husband would not be controlling.

To me, Being Taken In Hand means that I can relinquish the frustration I feel over certain things, knowing my husband can and will take care of them, and of me.

To me, being Taken In Hand means, not that I am submitting everything to my husband, but that I am submitting the things that I want to to his authority. This gives me the freedom to be who I really am and want to be: the woman who loves and cherishes her husband, and would do anything for him, and knows that he feels the same for me.

And if, during that journey, said authority requires that he make an object lesson, then I know that the love and trust I feel at being able to submit to his authority are equally matched by the love and trust he feels at knowing he is giving me what I both want and need, and that

I will not go running away crying "abuse".

Being Taken In Hand gives a couple, not matching weapons that can be used against each other, but matching keys to each other's hearts. Perhaps if you can see that what is being taken in hand is these keys, it might make understanding the concept easier.³

"BEING ABLE TO BE OPEN AND HONEST ABOUT MY FEELINGS" (8 JANUARY 2005)

Much of what a woman finds attractive in a Taken In Hand relationship is attention. I did not realize this myself until well into the process. My husband works very long hours in the corporate world, and in years past, I would have kept my loneliness to myself. Now I find that I am much more apt to say, "I'm not getting enough attention!" And my husband knows that "negative" attention (i.e., a spanking) is, as far as I am concerned, better than no attention.

This is not a threat on my part, but a willingness to be childlike and vulnerable. He is very apt under these circumstances to make more of an effort to give me "positive" attention. Often, at my request, that positive attention might include a light spanking, but not the harsher "punishment" that might result if my needs were not met and I subsequently began to act out in ways we've agreed are unhealthy for me.

Being able to be open and honest about my feelings is one of the greatest gifts of being in this kind of relationship.⁴

"DO YOU NEED MORE ATTENTION IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?" (8 JANUARY 2005)

Having a good relationship requires, amongst other things, that the individuals devote attention to one another. When life intervenes, and attention is lacking, one or other person can sometimes start to feel bad, start to miss the other person, start to miss engaging with the other person. This is not necessarily a sign that the person needs to toughen up and become less vulnerable, it is part of what it means to be human. Those who are happy not to see or talk to their spouse week in, week out may be proud of their psychological independence, but if you have a deep, intimate connection with someone, it is natural to want to engage with that person.

In some relationships, when people feel a lack of engagement, they are unable to express that openly and honestly. In many cases, they are unable to admit even to themselves that they feel such a lack. People think they should not feel like that. They see their need for engagement with the person they love as being a childish need for attention. Adults are supposed to be over that, they think. We're supposed to be independent and invulnerable. We're not supposed to need anyone.

And so, they panic. They start throwing damning-sounding labels around, and wondering if they need therapy. They despise their "co-dependency" and deny their human need for attention and engagement with the one they love.

But because they do need attention, they are drawn, unconsciously, to destructive actions. They sulk, snap at the person when he or she is there, and pine when he or she is not. They are less kind, less accommodating, more defensive. They might pick fights.

None of this is necessarily conscious or intentional, and sometimes, even when those acting in these destructive ways can see that this is what they are doing and want to stop, they are unable to, because there is still a problem to solve—still a lack of engagement.

You might think that the answer to this problem is to lead ever more separate lives, working towards not needing the other person at all. After all, you would not want to demand more than the other person is willing to give. Demanding more than the other person wants to give is a recipe for trouble, as I have argued before.* So having a goal of not needing the other person can be a valiant and honourable attempt not to impose on the other person.

But just what exactly is the point of being in a relationship if it is only theoretical and in your own mind? A relationship implies a connection between two individuals. If the relationship does not involve engaging with the other person, it is not a relationship you have, it is a fantasy. There is nothing wrong with having a fantasy; but don't confuse that with having a relationship.

Forget the ghastly psychobabble labels; forget the self-deprecation;

* "I want it all, and I want it now!" 3 December 2003.

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forget the goal of not needing the other person. Instead, work towards being honest and open about your desire for engagement, without imposing on the one you love. The more you can be open-hearted and honest about your feelings, the easier it will be to meet your need for engagement in the relationship, and the less you will find yourself acting destructively.

In a Taken In Hand relationship, as Charlotte's example* shows, and as Horst† has indicated, a little connecting spanking‡ can go a long way.⁵

"KEEPING THE LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN" (9 JANUARY 2004)

The head of the household's responsibility is to care for the entity created by two people... the relationship. The way he does this is to provide an open channel of communication between them. He hears what she has to say, he considers what she has to say, he keeps what she has to say confidential, he doesn't use her words against her. He protects the open line of communication and intimacy between the two.

This does not take responsibility away from the woman. It is a mutual trust that is established. However, I do believe it is up to the man to establish that line of communication

first and draw his significant other into this safety zone.

I believe you are actually protecting the relationship by providing that open communication. You validate her feelings; she is being heard, so that you may effectively guide the relationship so that it is mutually satisfying and she is not feeling frustrated. You do this by providing her a channel to communicate her feelings.

She isn't being a doormat or one that just follows orders. She can speak freely and honestly, as long as she does so respectfully, so you can gauge what she is feeling. This allows you to have the confidence to manage. Accepting responsibility for running the home isn't about giving orders—or about fulfilling the man's ego. It is about two people speaking openly and honestly, trusting and loving, in the interest of making their bond together stronger.⁶

"IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP ABUSIVE?" (9 JANUARY 2005)

One of the problems that you might come across is "When is it a Taken In Hand relationship, and when is it abuse?"

Most of us have a gut feeling about that, but Taken In Hand relationships being what they are, you may find your gut feeling and mine are not even close.

There is sometimes a confusion between personal limits—"No way would I do that!"—and objective limits—"No way should anyone do that!"

* "Being able to be open and honest about my feelings," 8 January 2005.

† "Prevention is better than cure," 7 January 2005.

‡ "Why you should not withhold spanking!" 29 November 2003.

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So we need to find an answer to “when is it abuse?” — a general answer that can be a guide for all sorts of different preferences and relationship styles.

The problem is that there are so many different preferences that coming up with objective limits is hard. Yeah, you can say “no amputations” but face it... plenty of people are being abused every day and not losing limbs or being killed. You can focus on physical damage and miss emotional abuse.

Remember also that men can be abused too. They can be pressured into doing things they don't want to do, manipulated, made to feel guilty, not get what they need from the relationship... We usually focus on the woman because the man is seen as less vulnerable, but women can be manipulative leeches, and men can be prisoners of their dominant role.

So how can you tell if it's abuse? And once you have decided that there is abuse, what next? I think that you can't do anything but help the person involved think about their situation, and offer them help to get out or solve it if they decide they need such help. You can't “rescue” them, you can only offer them the means to rescue themselves and support when they are ready to do it.

There are three main areas to think about:

1. How to tell if you are being abused or abusing someone.
2. How to tell someone you think they are suffering or committing abuse, and what to do about it.

3. How to deal with someone telling you they think you are suffering or committing abuse, and you think they are mistaken.

1. What is abuse in this context? I offer these possible guidelines in no particular order. I'm talking about relationships.

Is it Safe, Sane, and Consensual?

Safe: Both individuals know the risks and have minimised them to both people's satisfaction.

Sane: Both are capable of knowing what they are getting into, and are capable of informed consent.

Consensual: Both consent to what is happening and have a reasonable idea of what they are consenting to. The consent is free and not coerced by fear of something nasty happening, whether that nasty thing is physical harm or psychological harm, fear of the partner leaving, or of being called a wimp or whatever.

Is your relationship informed by Trust, Care, and Respect?

Trust: Your partner behaves predictably; you aren't walking on eggshells around them not knowing if they will go ballistic at something that was OK yesterday. You know what they will do, and you are happy with what they will do.

Care: Your partner cares about your welfare, your emotional and physical wellbeing. This applies no matter what kind of relationship you have.

Respect: Your partner respects you as a human being; they respect your choices, your abilities. They should

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value you as more than a convenient body.

Does the good outweigh the bad?

In any relationship there will be times when the bad feelings seem overwhelming. But if that seems to be always happening, then there is a problem. You may often have bad moments, bad days. But you shouldn't be having mostly bad times, and you should be getting enough good times.

Are you getting your needs met?

Each partner has the right to get what they need out of the relationship. Are you getting what you need? Not just erotic needs, (although they are important) but physical and emotional needs as well. If you are getting almost all, it may be OK, but if you look at what you need and you aren't getting it... then that's a danger sign. (Be careful about distinguishing desire from need.)

2. OK... so you have a friend you think is being abused, or you think that what someone has written on the internet is evidence that there is a problem. What do you do?

It's tricky. The person will likely not believe there is a problem. They may be quite happy, just playing at a level or with a kink you are not comfortable with. They may be convinced that they are supposed to feel the way they feel. Or they may be unwilling to face the idea that what was good is now bad for whatever reason. If it is a dominant man, he may feel that as he is the one who is in control, he can't admit to feeling bad.

This might be especially difficult when someone is in a relationship with deep dominance and submission. A woman might feel that because she asked to live under the authority of her man, she has to take what comes. She might think that she has given consent in the beginning and everything else is just her lot. She might feel honour-bound to "keep her word" to keep her self-respect. Even if she is unhappy, she may find it impossible to deal with the idea of breaking that bond. Such women aren't being stupid or suicidal, they have a very real and difficult problem.

Here are some ideas....

- Don't be negative about either partner. Don't say the person *or* their behaviour is bad. You might think it is so, but attacking in that way is no way to get someone listening to you.
- Get them talking about how they feel. Get them thinking about the points above. The first thing someone who is truly being abused (or is abusing) has to do is realise it is going on.
- Offer them help, no strings attached. Start with just a "if you want to talk it over, and get your head straight about the things I've been saying, then you can talk to me *any* time. I will help you get it sorted." Be very clear that you are not judging, not interfering, just offering an ear and help in sorting feelings. If you want to offer other help, then go for it, but probably best to wait and see how they go. Don't overwhelm them; it's a difficult time.
- Try to understand their state of mind. It can be hard to do, but

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you need to stand in their shoes, think with their emotions in order to communicate with them. A dominant man whose submissive partner is emotionally abusing him may not be able to deal with the idea that he is not in control, for example. If you can get yourself into that mindset you may be able to offer help in a way that does not conflict with pride.

3. Lastly... someone thinks that you yourself are being abused. You think they have the wrong end of the stick; how do you cope?

I don't think a simple denial is useful. You won't convince them, you'll just make them think that you are not thinking properly. Nor is it right to jump on them from a great height and tell them they are idiots for even thinking such things. They aren't idiots, they are just not fully informed. They want the best for you, so accept their concern.

The best bet is to show them where you fit in the abuse pointers above. If they think that what you are doing is risky, tell them what risks you see and how they have been minimised. If they worry about whether you are getting your needs met, then reassure them by telling them about some. If they seem to have a feeling that your partner is a bit deficient in trust, caring, and respect, then give them some examples that show the solid basis you have.

And you never know.... you might then find that things are not as good as you thought. Which then gives you the opportunity to repair your relationship before it goes bad. Or

get out if you suddenly realise your concerned friend was right.⁷

"PRACTICAL HINTS FOR MEN - TIMES OF STRESS" (10 JANUARY 2005)

A Taken in Hand relationship does not need to be put on hold because of stress in your life. In fact, that is exactly when the relationship needs the man's strength the most.

Your wife might decide that she does not want to obey or submit or whatever. However, it is very helpful to her to stay in charge and keep her in hand.

Otherwise, she has the added stress of having to keep herself in hand and, perhaps, taking on some of the dominance of the relationship.

Yes, it is difficult, but it is part of your role. You are providing stability for her when the other parts of her life are unstable.

So, if the dog dies or if you get fired or if your mother in law does... whatever... use your moments of discipline as a change to get away from the stress.

Focus her thoughts on you and her relationship with you in order to distract her from the outside pressures. She may rebel but that rebellion might really be a form of "acting out" caused by the stresses. Rein her in but make sure she continues to know that you love her.⁸

"PRACTICAL HINTS FOR MEN - YOU ARE ALLOWED TO ENJOY IT!" (11 JANUARY 2005)

Taking a woman in hand is not an act of selfless sacrifice. It is a loving

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thing between the two of you. There is no reason why you should not take pleasure in it.

Yes, it feels manipulative to put a woman over your lap or to take charge of her or make decisions for her. But, as long as you are doing it in a way that is good for her and that she wants and needs, go ahead and enjoy it.

Allow your ego to get stroked by the process. Enjoy the look and feel of her round, soft, feminine body. Savor the sounds of her crying and the feel of her tears on your neck. "Take" her every once in a while. Ask her to do things for you.

Don't get carried away, i.e. don't turn her into a servant or degrade her. On the other hand, do not feel that you need to be a monk or to deny yourself the pleasure of the whole thing.

If being Taken in Hand is something that she wants and/or needs, and if you are giving her what she wants, the pleasure of doing it is part of your reward.⁹

"SWITCHES DO GROW ON TREES" (12 JANUARY 2005)

GT and I were taking one of our weekend walks as we always do. We walk or hike in various different places. We chose to walk through a nature center that is located about five minutes from our home.

While we were walking we were talking about the interesting post* that Noone had written for Taken in

Hand about the switch being used as an implement. GT was explaining to me how Stephen warned that although striking with the switch was very quiet, the noise that came from his wife when being struck by the switch was another story. We continued on our way discussing other posts that we had read during the week.

We had come to the end of the trail that we were walking and turned around to head back where we had started our walk. About three quarters of the way back, I noticed a greenish red slender tree limb lying on the path that had not been there when we began our walk. I picked it up, looked at it and smiled at GT. The perfect switch. How strange was this?

I could tell by GT's body language that the butterfly effect had taken its strong hold on her. To make this long story short, we made our way home and yes, the switch is very quiet and does leave a lasting impression. And as GT said, just seeing it on the shelf creates that butterfly effect, which is a major contributor to her submission.¹⁰

"HOW BADLY I WANT THIS; HOW DIFFICULT IT IS TO ASK FOR IT" (13 JANUARY 2005)

I guess it's hard for men to understand how badly, how strongly, some women (me, for instance) want a man who will, in the general sense, more or less take charge and, the specific sense, enforce his authority by giving me a good spanking. A real one, and not a few taps – and do

* "Virtues of the lowly switch," 28 December 2004.

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it for good reasons and sometimes for no reasons. Just because he can.

And what's harder to understand, I guess, is that it's the most difficult thing imaginable to ask for. So far, I haven't been able to. I'm single now, so there is nobody really to ask. But when there has been, and the subject came up (only a couple of times, in passing) I have blushed red and felt my throat close from pure self-consciousness and, frankly, desire.

Also, I wonder: Will he want to? Will he be appalled? Uninterested.

Look, I want it. A lot. And I want him to want it, to really enjoy it, too. To get into it. To love it. Like I would.¹¹

"COULD MICROMANAGEMENT WORK FOR YOU, TOO?" (14 JANUARY 2005)

My marriage has always been good, but now that my husband and I have taken on very traditional male/female roles, it's even better!

Just because a woman is submissive doesn't mean that she is not intelligent! My husband is a smart, wonderful, loving man who values my opinion, and will almost always consult me when making a decision. But, because he is the head of the household, I trust him to make the right decisions, which he always does!

He knows that I will always respect and obey him, and he knows that I want him to set limits for me, and to punish me if I fall short of them. The first time he actually spanked me (which I completely deserved, by the way!) surprised me, because he is such a loving and kind

man. But, I am such a happy woman today because of it and we have a relationship that is filled with so much love and trust.

I am naturally submissive and he is naturally dominant, so once we tapped into those deep feelings, our marriage just got better and better! He is happy because his needs are being met—he has a calm, happy, obedient wife, and I am happy because my needs are being met—I am able to depend on a loving, strong, protective man.

Truly, nothing makes me happier than having him walk in the house after he's worked hard all day. When he sits down (after a big hug and kiss at the door!) I immediately kneel down and take off his shoes, get him what he wants to drink, bring his paper and mail to him, and then we share what's happened in our days. I treat him like the king that he is, and he treats me like a princess.

Of course, there are times when I make mistakes or forget to do something that I was supposed to do. Other times I might be cranky or PMS-ing, and I sometimes say something smart or snappy to him in a disrespectful tone. I always get an immediate reaction from him when I do that. I have had a sore bottom more than once for having a smart mouth or back-talking to him! But I have become a better person than I was before he took me in hand.

I am so much more focused since he began to correct and control me. I am also enjoying a new phase lately because he now has me make a list every day of specific errands and chores I need to get done. I have

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read some of the other comments and posts regarding the man micro-managing the woman, and I know that not everyone needs or agrees with this concept, but it's working out really well for us. I make the list with his guidance, and if I'm not able to follow it, we talk about how I can do better, and I sometimes get a few hard swats to my bottom. Believe me, the next day when I have a stinging bottom, I remember what I'm supposed to get done!

Anyway, we are a very, very happy man and wife with a loving marriage filled with passion and intimacy. I wouldn't want our relationship to be any other way because this feels so natural for us and has deepened the love we feel for each other.¹²

"WHY IS THIS DESIRE SO POWERFUL?" (15 JANUARY 2005)

Taken In Hand women sometimes wonder why they have such a powerful desire to be carefully corrected and well-controlled by the man whose authority they live under. It is a powerful desire, in my opinion, because they have made intellectual contact with powerful emotional forces. For most, the world is cacophonous... women's minds and feelings clash horribly. What they have heard they should be, and what their feminine feelings tell them they should be, are forever at odds.

When she asks "just to be held"... what does that mean? It is the modern woman's acknowledgement that she yearns to be protected and nur-

tured and cared about, and yes, therefore vulnerable; she asks for a man stronger than herself to surround her, envelop her and protect her from a world that often is cold and harsh and brutal.

Relative to facing by herself the vicissitudes of a callous and indifferent world, a little nude whipping is nothing at all!

Your crime, ladies, is that you are bright enough and insightful enough and most importantly, honest enough to understand the truth of what your body tells you.

Most women force away the energy of their submissive tendencies, divert it, as it were, to other more worldly (and politically-correct!) pursuits. And they are left with a lot of worldly accomplishments by day, but with frigidity, frustration, and anger to comfort them at night.

Your drive is strong because it is unadulterated; it is directly from you, from your heart.¹³

"WORKING WIVES" (16 JANUARY 2005)

Some might think that Taken In Hand means wives not being allowed to work outside the home, and indeed, in some cases, where it suits the couple concerned, that might be true. But I am a Taken In Hand woman and not only am I permitted to work outside of the home my husband expects it of me. He doesn't force me but out of respect I choose to work outside of the home. It was understood when I quit working (when our first child was born) that when all our children were of school age I would go back to work.

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My husband made enough money for us live at a modest rate, buy a home, have modest vacations mostly staying with friends or relatives etc. We never went without but were certainly not well off. I have a fairly well paying career skill and my husband looked forward for many years to me returning to work. Out of respect for his wishes I returned to work when our last child entered school.

Frankly, I would rather not work. I would prefer to stay home and just focus on my job as a wife and mother. My husband and I have fought many a time over this issue. I have been taken in hand not for disagreeing (I am of course allowed to express any opinion I have) but basically for being bitchy in my expressions of my frustration at being a working mother.

I have been told by my husband that I can quit anytime I want and I know he means it. Yet I know that we won't be unified if I do. I don't know whether I'll continue to work or not. If I do or don't I want it to be based on a mutual agreement between my husband and me. That's what he wants too. He knows he can make me work and of course I would. He won't do that. I work because I love my husband and I trust his decision that this is best for our family financially and otherwise.

By the way, lest you think I slave away all day at my husband's request and then come home to complete all the household chores myself I must explain otherwise. My husband has made every effort to help me through this transition back to work. He does more of the cook-

ing, shopping, and cleaning than I do. The children help with the cleaning as well and we have a woman come every other week for the major cleaning.

My husband did the majority of everything the first year I was back to work because I was so wiped out every day. Now he still does more but I am working very hard to take some of the burden off of him. He does a large majority of taking care of the children and their needs. My children have always been fortunate to have a very involved father and since I started working he has become even more actively involved in their care. Again I am trying to find some balance here and am working fewer hours this year so I can have more energy for my family.

The point that I am trying to make is that a woman's working or not has no bearing on how submissive she is to her husband. It will have more to do with the individual relationship and desires of her husband as well as her own desires. I would love to meet my husband at the door with his newspaper and his slippers, but that is not his idea of what he wants out of a wife. He wants a financial as well as emotional helper. I am more than willing to bend my wishes to adjust to his especially since he adapted to me staying home for many years while our children were small. All relationships require compromise, Taken In Hand or not.¹⁴

**"ENJOYING OUR RELATIONSHIP" (16
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I love my husband, and the deeply submissive part of me is so fulfilled when I have given him pleasure in any form. My day-to-day obedience pleases him because our lives run smoothly and things get accomplished. The fact that I look up to him for guidance and control pleases him because he feels respected and trusted. And, of course, he loves the sexual part of our relationship, which is where we can explore our dominant and submissive sides in a playful, loving atmosphere! If he didn't enjoy the control he has over me, then I truly wouldn't be as fulfilled as I am.

When we were first together, before we got married, he waited to truly show me his true dominant nature because he wasn't sure if it would be accepted by me. He also bought into society's general bashing of dominant men and submissive women and didn't think many women really wanted to look up to a strong man.

Unfortunately, he had been married to a shrewish woman who constantly fought and argued with him about everything. There was no harmony in his home at all, there were just daily power struggles over who was in charge and who would make decisions. His sex life was almost nonexistent, he was continually rebuffed (she actually used to slap him away at night if he tried to get close to her!). She constantly belittled him and complained about him to anyone who would listen (to very inappropriate people, like his family, children, employees, etc.). And he is a really wonderful, hard-working, successful man! All he wanted was

to be appreciated and loved by the woman in his life. He felt almost hopeless in his life by the time I met him, and completely out of touch with his dominant, masculine side.

Our marriage is completely different. There are no power struggles because I let him lead and be the man he wants to be, and that I want him to be. We have a peaceful, loving home life because I really, really want to nurture and serve him, which makes us both happy. He wants to know how I feel about something and discusses almost everything with me before he makes the final decision. He knows that I will obey him and not criticize the way he does things. Our sex life is so very satisfying because we are both willing to open up and share our fantasies and talk about everything with each other.

He says now that he never knew before that he could be this happy. Because of his past experiences, he didn't realize that there are women out there who need their men to be dominant and wear the pants in the family. We want the reassurance and comforting feeling it gives us. And we definitely want our wonderful dominant men to be happy and enjoy it! So enjoy your Taken in Hand relationship—it's a precious gift!¹⁵

"MEN TAKING RESPONSIBILITY" (17 JANUARY 2005)

One of the finest results of a Taken In Hand relationship is that it frees and encourages a husband to take

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serious responsibility for his whole family—not just his wife.

In our case, my husband was always responsible and loving and involved, but since beginning our new relationship, he has become much more demanding of himself. In some ways, for the first time, he understands his importance as a leader for his children. I am finding that he takes the initiative in having discussions with our children, whereas before I was often the buffer between them. He is thinking seriously about how he wants his children to grow up and how he wants his household to function. This is a huge relief to me, and a tremendous gift to our children. He has also taken over handling the finances, which had always been a burden to me. Likewise, he is becoming more involved in our church and community.

It seems that our society—at least in the U.S.—has discouraged the leadership of husbands and fathers over the last couple of decades to the point where young men are assuming that *women* are responsible for the wellbeing of their families. The tragedy of this is seen in the appalling poverty level of single women and children, in men gleefully impregnating several women and taking responsibility for none, and in expecting women to be able to handle everything, including earning the money. It also results in women feeling foolish and strange if they long for a strong man to provide a safe harbor for them.

Thank goodness, some of us who feel this way have finally accepted our nature and are reaping the re-

wards. (And when I say this I don't mean *every* woman feels this way!!)¹⁶

“IN MY ROOM” (18 JANUARY 2005)

In my perfect world... I believe it's the man's job to create a safe environment for him and his S/O to enter. If you can imagine... a room with no windows and only one door. No way in or out, except through that door. The man's job is to secure that room and protect it from intrusion. He brings his S/O into that room and secures the door behind him.

In this room it is safe. Everything and anything said in this room, *stays* in this room. There is a complete freedom to express all thoughts, fears, hopes and dreams, without the fear of any repercussions. It is a place for complete honesty. She trusts him to protect the integrity of that room. He trusts her to keep his words in that room. Communication in here is used to connect, not to be used as ammunition in future disagreements. Protecting the intimacy is vital. The couple shares responsibility of the integrity of that room. If broken, the ability to trust the other again will become a barrier to connection.

The purpose of this room is to remove barriers that might be hidden deep within. Exposing demons (past issues that haven't been properly put away) and dealing with them together, as a couple, instead of them being fought off individually. Each demon that is dealt with, each issue that is resolved, solidifies an even deeper connection as you learn to trust each other more and more. This trust becomes so deep, the feeling of

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connection, trust, security, love, passion, it is almost hypnotic.

We often hear about subspace, but I believe there is an analogous state of mind in the dominant man too. You are so *deep* with your partner in your own world—the one that you have created together—that nothing else matters. You feel completely connected to each other, blissful, at peace.

Sometimes, getting your S/O into that room isn't easy—she wants to go, but barriers get in the way: emotions, attitude, behavior harmful to the relationship, a lack of confidence in him or just plain bitchiness. It isn't that she doesn't want to go there—she just can't. *His job* is to remove those barriers.

Sometimes it takes discipline. Sometimes it takes giving her some flowers and reminding her how special she is. Sometimes it takes **listening**—listen up guys! Not necessarily having an answer for her, but at least hearing her issue. I think men like to problem-solve, and I know I get frustrated when I don't have answers. I've learned it is OK for me not to have the answers but more than OK for me to just listen and really *hear* what she's saying.

Unresolved issues form a barrier that keeps you from connecting. Certain physical acts can put up an instant barrier because of past abuse issues left unresolved. In this room you can talk about those issues and perhaps resolve it by talking it out with your loved one. She may find he loves her anyway, or perhaps, even more because she's trusted him with a secret that she's guarded for so long. There is confidence that

builds when you know you and your partner will battle these demons together.

I'm not one that makes a lot of rules for the sake of having rules. The rules that are in place are ones that protect the relationship and ones that ensure I get the best effort from my partner. Attitudes, withdrawal of communication, neglect of specific duties, are the foundation for rules that eliminate the power struggle. Understanding we have individual needs, and sometimes an individual's needs need to be met to make the relationship better. Balancing between the individual needs and the relationship needs are a fine line.

Decisions that are made should not jeopardize the integrity of the relationship or the individual. If the man acts with integrity and shows he doesn't take the shortcuts when no one is looking, she will see this and learn to trust his decisions and give him the benefit of the doubt when in doubt.

Taking her in hand in this “room” can provide a feeling of protection, safety, intimacy, care, devotion, and love between you. It's a powerful and wonderful dynamic.¹⁷

“PRACTICAL HINTS FOR MEN - HANDLING A STRONG WOMAN” (19 JANAUARY 2005)

If your lady wants to be taken in hand and she has a strong dominant personality she might actually be tired of being dominant.

Perhaps she is a leader or manager in her job. Perhaps she has heavy responsibilities. This is the twenty

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first century and there are a lot of strong women out there.

And strong women can often have the same kinds of needs as strong men. We have all heard of the CEO who runs a 5,000-person company but is submissive when he gets behind closed doors. Why? Because he needs to let go.

Well, women have the same needs but they are often expressed differently and they need to be handled differently.

A strong man who wants to submit, usually needs someone *extremely* strong and dominant. However, a strong woman usually needs a man who is just a little bit stronger than she is.

Her dominating man needs to be strong enough to tame her but not so strong that she feels insignificant.

Think of the lioness: Lionesses kill for a living. They bring down antelopes, zebras and all kinds of big creatures. And yet, they are dominated by lions.

At the end of a long day of harvesting water-buffalo, a lioness comes home to her lion and lays at his feet, basking in his protection.

The lion doesn't actually do a lot of growling or biting. He doesn't have to. His main function is to protect the lionesses and the cubs. He keeps them safe by scaring the bejeebers out of everything else in the food chain.

So, if you are trying to take a strong woman in hand, be a strong man, be stronger than her, but don't feel that you need to be overwhelmingly powerful.

Use whatever strength you need to use plus just a little bit more. That's all it takes.¹⁸

"ATTENTION TO DETAIL" (20 JANUARY 2005)

What a wonderful journey Taken In Hand has turned out to be for my wife and me. We have had some challenges as I am sure that most couples have once they start. As most of you know or have read my wife and I are somewhat new to Taken In Hand (13 months). But we have made huge strides by taking baby steps and by paying attention to detail. We also read all the wonderful articles posted on Taken In Hand.

In our relationship I drive, I am the head of the household, and I have my wife's blanket consent. At the start of this journey my wife sent me an e-mail and was reminiscing about a spat we had had in the first years of our marriage. I had taken her over my knee and spanked her behind. My wife wrote about how much she had craved and desired that kind of attention from that day on, but had been too afraid to tell me.

Taken In Hand the first month was such a trial and error month but without really realizing it, communication and connection was really flourishing. I found myself not only listening to my wife when we were in discussion, but I was hearing and paying attention to detail.

I think at that point I was starting to get it. Things were going great for the next handful of months then one

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of those challenges reared its ugly head.

When they finally get the nerve to ask to be Taken In Hand, and it becomes reality, some women become a little impatient and grow weary of the two steps forward one step back dynamic that seems to exist in the early stages of Taken In Hand. They may have a tendency to push for more, trying to control the process. I think that this is common in most Taken In Hand relationships unless the male initiates Taken In Hand, and it is understandable. It is the woman's way of testing your control, and it is important not to drop the ball at that point. By paying attention to detail you can recognize when a lady is doing this and will be able to extinguish this small fire right away.

One way to handle this is engage your lady and ask her firmly, "Do you think you are in charge now?" If she is still resistant or cops an attitude, you can prompt her again. If she doesn't respond positively at that point the dynamics change. Remain calm, and establish your authority by correcting her physically. This will reassure her that you are in control.

Attention to detail is of the utmost importance at this point. Patiently explain why you are doing this, all the while paying attention to the sound of her voice, the tenseness of her muscles, any marks or color, how she seems psychologically, and whether she is still struggling or resisting.

Attention to detail is a major tool in helping me conclude if my wife has had enough. Once I have deter-

mined that she has reached that totally submissive state, a major connection takes place, and yes it is a very magical dynamic that seems like a fantasy but believe me it is real; my wife is in what she calls "the zone".

Attention to detail has been a major factor in our success in our Taken In Hand relationship. It helped me squash a potentially disastrous situation and major disconnection. I have not had to address that issue since. Certainly it will take a little time to develop the necessary attention to detail, but once you have it, what marvelous tool it is.¹⁹

"GIVING MY BEST TO MY MAN WHO PUT HIS FOOT DOWN" (23 JANUARY 2005)

My man and I have a Taken In Hand relationship. It is unspoken, unlabeled, rather. In fact I had no name for it until stumbling across this website!

Early in our relationship, I would instigate reactions out of him on a regular basis out of sport for myself. One day he put his foot down and made it very clear he did not like my sport at all, even though I had meant it in friendly jest. I pouted for a while, but I stopped abruptly and no longer play like that. To do so would be crossing a line he has drawn for my behavior with him. It is much better in the long run for me to set aside my antics to please him because I value and respect him. I love who I am when in his company. I learned that day that testing him is not necessary. He learned that day that I take our relationship seriously.

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To be clear, I must say that while he is definitely the caliber of man to do so, he has never spanked me in punishment. That said, I am fully in his hand! His eye and his tone set me straight in a way no other man might ever hope to strive for with me. I never want to weaken or lose that quality for either of us. I am quite afraid to transgress so much that he feels an earnest spanking is necessary. Knowing he will should he need to is enough for me at this point. In fact this is very the core of why I loved him from the beginning.

I do not need a babysitter. I am not a little girl. I am a woman. His woman. And I carry myself publicly in such a way as to bring him honor. Because the love he gives me is my honor, and my pleasure.²⁰

"WHAT IT IS THAT WE DO" (24 JANUARY 2005)

Subject: Not Quite a Scene Report

(This is intended primarily as humor, but parts probably deserve an adults-only label. If you aren't an adult or don't want to read possibly offensive stuff, don't read it.)

(Very slightly expurgated from the original version)

From: Thorney

Organization: Lurkers

Preface

I'm delighted with how this group has helped me to understand and increase my enjoyment of my own kinks (here = nonvanilla preferences) and put them in a context, and your remarkable ability for tolerating nonstandard kinks. I started

to write this as "what makes you feel sexy" and that didn't work, my efforts at writing either scene reports or pornography (stories?) sound a bit juvenile to me, and my sense of humor is a bit too weird to work well on this planet, so I'm not sure what genre this is, but here goes...

Introduction

At the suggestion of several in the group, helping me try to fit what-it-is-that-I-do into the vocabulary and headspace of what-it-is-that-we-do, I've been reading some of the books you recommend.

Many parts would squick my wife very badly, and some others didn't make much erotic sense to me on first reading. I mean, why would anyone get off on requiring a slave to take foreign language lessons? And then my wife / toy and I went to a rather wonderful church supper (Episcopal this time, two excellent speeches by a pair of bishops...) and I fell into a most remarkable sexual-high reverie, that has gone on for days, remembering a scene some time ago, before I delurked...

Scene 1.

During a nice dinner, my wife excitedly reported on the progress she'd made on the assignment I'd given her to work on during the day. Nothing as sexy as the evening a few days earlier when dessert was chocolate sauce on her nipples, but very pleasant and with a real undercurrent of excitement as we looked forward to the evening ahead.

After dinner I settled into my easy chair watching her striptease (she does a wonderful job of bending

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over to emphasize that delightful curve of her bottom) and then she happily scampered around gathering the things I had asked her to collect for me. She piled them in easy reach, approached me, and knelt down between my knees, becoming once again my indescribably delicious naked sex toy, fully attentive, fully cooperative, and fully prepared to discuss the political and religious trends leading to the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D. where...

[Curtain crashes down to sound of thunderous protests]

Entre'act

Entire Chorus: "Come off it, Thorney, we knew you had a sick mind..."

"That isn't even a plausible fantasy...."

"So what did really happen, anyway?...."

Author, cowering: "Well, it's almost exactly true... I did take a little literary license for readability ... I was seated on the side of the bed, not my easy chair, so we could both sprawl out and easily touch each other and still reach all the stuff we wanted...

Chorus: "That's not what we meant, Thorney..."

Author: "and actually it wasn't the Council of Nicaea, I figured that was something people had heard of, we were really discussing the motivations behind the amendments to the Nicene Creed adopted at the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D...."

[Author retreats under hail of tomatoes and other objects...]

Scene 2

After an hour or two of discussion and foreplay, we actually decided we had figured out the intellectual points at issue, and my fingers had gotten too wet and sticky to turn the pages, so my still-naked slavegirl gave me another nice chance to admire and pat and squeeze various parts of her anatomy as she gathered up the books to lay them to one side (she does *such* a nice job of bending over...) and we were so excited I couldn't wait through anything like the kind of preliminary attention she offered, I was on her and we had the best time together that we'd had in weeks. And while neither of us is into pain or marks I did actually wind up with a bruise on my back this time, because we were trying to change positions without my pulling out and I lost my balance and flopped over too hard and stabbed my back with the *very* sharp corner of an extremely heavy multi-language Bible that she had overlooked and was tangled in the sheets...*

[Curtain falls as angry mob runs author out of newsgroup on a rail...]²¹

"WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOUR WIFE DAMAGED THE CAR?" (26 JANUARY 2005)

Recently, by pure carelessness, I expensively damaged our car. My

* [Editor's note: This originally appeared on the usenet newsgroup soc.subculture.bondage-bdsm. Many thanks to the author for permission to post it here.]

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husband was very cross, understandably, for we cannot afford to waste money on expensive repairs caused by carelessness. After the initial spark of anger, he calmed down and then walked out to think it over. I anxiously waited alone to hear my fate. At last he came home, fully relaxed, and took me in his arms, kissed me and fondled me. He told me that he had decided to do two things, and that he would make passionate love to me to show me that he loved me and that I was fully forgiven.

I was very relieved and quite excited, but on the way upstairs to the bedroom I suddenly remembered that he said he was going to do two things, and I stopped and asked him what the other thing was that he was going to do. He just smiled, and said casually that I could surely not expect to get away scot-free, and that he was going to spank me first, and then make passionate love to me.

I could hardly argue with his logic and would not have been allowed to anyway. So I got my spanking—a good sound one too. But I also got my passionate lovemaking afterward.

That, ladies, is what I call the perfect husband and the perfect leader who is prepared to take me in hand firmly but lovingly. And I love it.²²

"HOW OFTEN DO YOU HAVE SEX?" (26 JANUARY 2005)

Subject: Re: Question for the group... how often?

From: Thorney

The person starting the thread wrote:

1. How often do you have sex?
2. How often does it involve a scene or bdsm play?
3. How long have you been in this particular relationship?

Since I've had affirmative responses in the group and by e-mail for offering (explicit) details, here goes.

I'm in my late 50's, Mrs. Thorney over 75 (one of my concessions to anonymity is to round to about 5 years). I had a nasty divorce about 25 years ago, she a more amicable one about 30 years ago (numerous children). A few years after my divorce I went to teach at a different school and she noticed me and set out to catch me (she says), contriving to sit next to me at faculty meetings, be valuable professionally, etc. I see no reason to disbelieve her reports but from my point of view I simple fell in lust, then love, with an exceptionally helpful older colleague. We married about 20 years ago. I think it fair to say that we have each trained the other to be exactly what we want in a spouse / lover / partner, and are both extremely happy with the arrangement.

She asserts that satisfying me is very easy, she just tries a lot of things and watches and remembers what works. I describe the process as seducing her into behavior I enjoy, by making suggestions and rewarding / praising things I like. On the other hand, while playing Top, I insist that she is not allowed to keep secrets from me about what turns

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her on, what she wants, what is working. Since one of my great pleasures is driving her into ecstasy, I figure I'm entitled to require that she help.

You asked about frequency of sex and frequency of wiitwd (what it is that we do).

As of fifteen years ago (notes from the psychological interviews associated with a child visitation lawsuit) we typically had intercourse 10 to 14 times a week. Now it is typically 5 to 7, weighted toward the 7. As she got older, her tissues got a little more prone to injury or infection and we eventually settled on once a day, but learning to stretch that one session out longer. She maintains my interest for as long as she wants by knowing my hot spots, mental and physical—I don't fully understand the left-over adolescent in me that responds so well to a plea of "Please fuck me harder, Master!", but that is no reason not to enjoy it. Nor do I fully understand the manipulations she does that bring me off when she is ready (or I request it) but it works spectacularly well.

Most of our sessions involve at least that sort of role-play; the rare exceptions would be if there is a grandchild in easy earshot or during the very rare family crises (e.g. death or divorce in family) when straight tenderness is indicated.

During the rest of the day, we "play" with great frequency. Some of this is ritual stuff, observed rather flexibly. I choose what panties she is going to wear and confiscate them occasionally. If we are home alone, she'll hoist her skirt so I can watch her bottom as she walks upstairs.

She denies being at all submissive or having any interest in being kinky, she just says she is the world's greatest expert at keeping me happy (she is) and that I do the same for her. I frequently follow her into the bathroom so that she can lick my penis while she pees; I've asked her if that is "kinky" and she says, "no, we are just doing something we both enjoy." Lately I've been asking her to kneel down naked and kiss my feet; she says she is willing to do that "only when she wants to" but so far she's decided she wants to each time I've "suggested" it. As I say, the process involves seduction and negotiation (she likes foot rubs, which I provide when asked). I like to put sexy outfits (or none) when we exercise together and pose her and photograph her in extreme and/or revealing poses. She praises my being supportive and attentive about her exercising for helping her to be in such good shape (at 75+ she does white water rafting and ocean rowing).

We have a great many common intellectual interests and enjoy reading books out loud to each other. For years the children complained of the frequency with which second derivatives kept cropping up in discussions at breakfast. Many an evening will find us naked together in bed with several reference books open, engaging in serious theological discussion and sexplay ("May I please have a spanking now, Master?") simultaneously.

I feel I have the world's most exquisite submissive, and also get to satisfy quite a few of my other stray fantasies; she gets all the attention

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she wants and obviously loves feeling that she can be an irresistible sexual attraction to a man 20 years younger.

We don't easily fit in any of the standard "categories" of wiitwd. (I sometimes say that our main unifying fetish is Church History and Comparative Theology, but that is clearly an oversimplification).

As usual, I've departed a long way from the question.* Hope it was helpful.²³

"If I ASKED FOR THE MOON..." (27 JANUARY 2005)

I have recently come to appreciate much more than I ever did how lucky I am to be married to my husband. As long as I have known him, more than anything else, he has always wanted me to be happy.

On our honeymoon, I remember how he was always asking me what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go, and if I so much as glanced at anything in a shop he would ask me if I wanted it, even though I had plenty of money of my own at that time. And he's always been the same, even though I've frequently driven him round the bend, he has always wanted me to have everything I wanted and to do everything that I've wanted to do.

He has always been more anxious to please me than I have been to please him, and I have taken advantage of this fact. To be honest, I

still do, though these days I try harder to consider what he wants rather than just thinking about what I want. For instance, a few months ago, in response to my own anxieties about running up excessive credit card bills etc., he imposed a ban on me buying anything non-essential without asking him first (naturally, this does not include books, which my husband quite understands are essentials as far as I am concerned). In practice, though, he has never actually said "no" when I've asked him if I could buy anything, and I doubt if he actually ever would. I have toyed with the idea of testing this by asking if I could buy something outrageously expensive ("Darling, there's this wonderful Faberge egg on eBay"), but I feel that he would probably suspect that I was taking the Mickey, and respond accordingly.

Because he is so attuned to thinking about what I want, even my infrequent attempts to consider his tastes rather than my own have generally been unsuccessful. The curtain incident always comes to mind. A few years ago he decided we needed to get new curtains for the living room, and I was looking through a catalogue when I found some I fell in love with instantly. They were designed by an Australian Aboriginal artist and the patterns were based on Aboriginal Dreamtime art, fantastic bold patterns in bright contrasting colours, I absolutely adored them but I knew my husband, whose tastes in interior decoration are considerably more conservative than mine, would hate them. So when he asked me if I'd seen any I

* [Editor's note: This was originally posted on the usenet newsgroup soc.subculture.bondage-bdsm...]

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liked, I pointed out a couple of more conventional designs that I thought he might approve.

He took the catalogue and flicked through it, then he looked at me with a puzzled expression "Don't you want these?" he asked, pointing to my wonderful Dreamtime curtains. "Oh, but I thought you'd hate those," I said, rather taken aback. "I don't mind getting them if you'd like them," he replied firmly. I was quite overwhelmed with love, because a) he knew me well enough to recognise the curtains of my heart's desire, and b) He was prepared, for my sake, to put up with them.

Although he is very appreciative of my attempts to try harder with the housework etc, even there he will still come in, and, seeing me cleaning up the living room for instance will say, "I'll do that, you know you don't really like doing it." Admittedly, I know this is partly because he knows he can simply do it more efficiently than I can (nothing I clean ever looks as clean as it does when he cleans it), but still the thought is there.

I just can't imagine him ever wanting to deprive me of anything that he thought could give me pleasure, or wanting to stop me going anywhere that I wanted to go, if I fancied a trip to the Moon he'd probably try to arrange it for me.²⁴

"IS THIS REALLY CONSENSUAL?" (27 JANUARY 2005)

If you have no interest in any sort of Taken In Hand relationship, you are unlikely to enjoy consensual

"coercion" or consensual non-consent. If you are then corrected or controlled by a man, you will not be consenting, obviously, and should not be treated that way. Being taken in hand is not for everyone.

But it is for some. And for those individuals, being taken in hand, whether physically or purely psychologically, is something they passionately want. If you want something with all your heart, you are consenting. On this site, we advocate only consensual relationships, and you should keep this in mind as you read.

Because part of what many Taken In Hand readers find exciting is control, authority and correction, and not just as a game but in reality, we do not always mention consent. If what you want is to be controlled and corrected by the head of your household, the last thing you want to read is a lot of posts telling you to call the police if your man steps out of line. If you have been happily married for 40 years, you don't need to keep going back to basics about it being consensual and safe, because that is just *obvious*. Not mentioning consent and safety every other line does not mean it is not safe and consensual. If what you want is to be taken in hand against your will, the last thing you want to read are endless disclaimers stressing that it is all consensual. But make no mistake, **we are talking only about consensual relationships and we abhor abuse.**

Most consent-giving is done tacitly, through tiny non-verbal and indirect verbal signals, not directly. Sometimes a direct, clear yes or no is

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necessary, but especially in a long-term Taken In Hand relationship, it often isn't necessary. That there is no explicit consent does not mean that there is no consent. It is often a "complex dance with each reacting and adapting to the other's reactions," as one Taken In Hand writer has said.*

In a Taken In Hand relationship in which a woman wants to be taken or taken in hand against her will, to you as an outside observer it could look nonconsensual even though the woman herself would not in any way thank you for rescuing her from the man who is taking her or taking her in hand. She might be resisting, she might be submitting but screaming for it to stop, she might be crying. It might *look* really bad, *and yet still be consensual*. If this is difficult for you to understand, even after reading the articles I list below, you will probably not like this site.

If you haven't done already, you might want to read the following series on consent.† The first article explores the idea of consent generally; the second explains the paradoxical idea of "wanting non-consent" (consensual non-consent).²⁵

"WHAT IS THE SECRET RECIPE?" (28 JANUARY 2005)

* "The dance of consent," 22 December 2004.

† [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **Is this really consensual?**]

It's rather ironic that I'm writing this having received a "punishment spanking" a scant two hours ago. But I suppose that puts me in a good position to comment on how it feels while the experience is still fresh in my mind, my psyche, (and other areas as well!).

Foremost is the sense of security. The knowledge that the lapses in judgement that I make in this relationship will result in a traditional session of punishment, atonement, and forgiveness rather than putting the relationship itself in jeopardy is a comforting one. It allows me to be myself in a way that I have found difficult in past relationships.

Conversely, there is the insecurity too. The intense rush of emotional bonding that comes from the acceptance of this man's authority over my actions and my heart cannot help but feel rather overpowering. When one's dreams come true, the fear of waking up can be rather intimidating.

Arousal? Physically, my body will always involuntarily respond to corporal punishment by becoming aroused, but sex is the very last thing on my mind after receiving this kind of spanking. Being held, being comforted, being told that I'm loved, and forgiven, and everything will be all right is what I crave after being punished.

Conversely, the same scenario that seems so very non-sexual as it's happening may well be the same scenario that appears in my private fantasies for the next month, being replayed and refined in my imagination, and inspiring me to new heights of pleasure.

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All of my emotional doors are blown wide open by such an experience, as if I've been caught up by the gale winds of some powerful authoritative force that I can't resist. I searched for this experience for most of my life, and now that it's here, the happiness and gratitude are overwhelming, and sometimes so is the resistance, and the uncertainty.

So what is the secret recipe? Not the spanking, *per se*. I've had many, many spankings by many different gentlemen, and none of them took me where I am tonight. Instead, I believe the intensity of this experience comes from the delicate combination of diverse and seemingly disparate elements: Take equal measures of pain & pleasure, strength & weakness, fear & elation, anticipation & dread, contentment & intensity, resistance & surrender. Bring ingredients to a slow boil. Stir in love, arousal, and a heaping tablespoon of contradiction, garnish with a pinch of the indefinable, and serve hot.

This is arousal that transcends the sexual, and even the psychological, and speaks to our very souls.

And ya can't get much more arousing than that!²⁶

"THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT" (29 JANUARY 2005)

I cherish the wonderful moments when I have the opportunity to feel the "butterfly effect". It happens just before I am physically taken in hand or reminded that there is a very good possibility that I will be if something doesn't change. It is both

emotional and physical. Emotionally, there is apprehension—the slight trepidation associated with submitting to correction. There is a deep desire to give up control, and apprehension about what will happen. There is also a deep sense of security—the feeling that comes when Race shows he cares enough to do whatever needs to be done for me to be happy and "in the zone" as we call it. This is connection—both souls connecting to become one. Physically, there is that feeling in the pit of my stomach, the adrenalin of fear and sexual arousal. It's a physical rush that makes some people shake. This is the butterfly effect.

Race and I have been married for thirty years this month. We were married when I was 16. We have always been close and had a good life together. For us, taking this Taken In Hand journey has raised the bar in all areas of our relationship. Now that we have experienced this level of connection there is no going back. Anyone who has experienced this knows what I mean.

The butterfly effect one of the wonderful benefits for me of our Taken In Hand relationship, and I truly hope that if you experience this feeling, it continues and you cherish it. For those who do not experience this but want to, I hope you will experience it soon, because it is tremendously connecting.²⁷

"ARE YOU SUBMISSIVE TO ALL MEN OR TO ONLY ONE MAN?" (30 JANUARY 2005)

Because of my submissive nature, as well as my Southern upbringing, I

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often found myself tolerating sexist comments and inappropriate remarks or flirtations from men without defending myself. I worried that if I ever felt truly threatened by a man I might lack the nerve to defend myself properly, or might fail to voice my objections loud enough or soon enough to protect myself.

Since telling my husband about what I truly desired in a relationship and beginning our Taken In Hand journey, there has been a very definite change in the way I feel around other men. Because I feel so strongly that I belong to my husband, and my husband only, I believe I give off a less vulnerable air. I find that men no longer make inappropriate remarks to me and that they treat me with more respect.

Now, when I imagine myself being stalked or attacked, I can easily imagine forcefully objecting and defending myself. As a Christian, I had never really noticed before that the Scripture makes this distinction. The New Testament tells women to submit to their *husbands*, not men in general! Understanding this distinction in my own life has felt very empowering!²⁸

“DO YOU HAVE THESE VITAL QUALITIES WOMEN WANT IN A MAN?” (31 JANUARY 2005)

I am not in a Taken In Hand relationship right now, but thanks to the boss's wonderful site, I am very clear that when I eventually settle down with that certain someone, this is the type of relationship I want. In fact, it is the kind of rela-

tionship I have always wanted, although until I found this site my vision of what that meant was somewhat foggy.

This has, of course, led me to do a lot of thinking, particularly about the kind of man I am looking for. Some of the discussion on the Yahoo list* has also got me thinking....

I want a truly male-led relationship, but I am far from a passive woman—something I think I have in common with most of the women on this site! I have responsibilities and goals in my life that are deeply important to me, and these are things that the man I am with will need to be able to respect and support. (And I certainly expect to do the same for him.)

Which leads me to this. For me at least, there are three qualities of character that a man would have to have before I could even think about submitting to him.

The first is that he needs to “have himself in hand”. If a man is out of control of himself, whether that be of his temper, his spending, his drinking, or whatever, how could I possibly let him be in control of me?

The second quality, which really goes hand in hand with the first, is his integrity. My own integrity, both in little things and in the way I structure my life as a whole, is profoundly important to me, and I could not respect a man for whom this was not also true. I think that we all have a responsibility to give back to this world, in large or small ways, and I

* See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20120425145823/http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Taken_In_Hand/>

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could not give my submission in a deep and lasting way to a man who did not share this sense of responsibility.

The third quality is the ability to lead from his heart. To me, the essence of true leadership consists of;

- a) having a vision or goal firmly in mind, and being able to move consistently towards that goal
- b) the ability to inspire others to share that vision and help towards its achievement
- c) a genuine caring and respect for the people one leads. In my experience, people will not follow a dictator very long or very sincerely. They won't follow him at all unless forced to out of fear. However, someone who leads from his (or her) heart, with a genuine commitment to the well-being of those being led, inspires a great deal of loyalty and devotion.

In the case of a relationship, the vision in question would be for the type of relationship and family that we were creating together.

I am very interested in the erotic aspects of a Taken In Hand relationship, and I do have a lifelong interest in being spanked. However, for this to move from the arena of play into my real life, I need to be able to deeply respect the man I am giving my submission to. I need to see him in control of himself, respect his integrity and the values with which he conducts his life, and feel secure in the quality of his loving leadership.

I don't expect him to be perfect, and I expect that, as with any healthy relationship, the one we share will help both of us become

better people. My ability to give love and be supportive is very strong, and I long for the opportunity to do this as well.

What was said here* really touched me, because my grandparents are also my own model of what a wonderful marriage can truly be. My grandparents are about to celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary. They are still both very active, busy, happy, healthy people, and they are deeply and obviously in love with each other. My grandmother defers to my grandfather in everything, and he devotes himself to her happiness and comfort. They are two of the most contented people I have ever met, and have a close-knit family who love and respect them. They have also, despite the modest salary my grandfather earned in a professional life of public service, become financially comfortable due to good financial management. My grandfather is highly respected in his field (he still consults part-time) and is deeply beloved by people his life touched and helped over many decades.

My grandfather also has the highest level of personal integrity. He lives his life according to strong set of spiritual values, although he is also one of the most accepting, non-judgemental people I have ever known. I have never heard him raise his voice or become angry. My grandmother says that in all the time they have been together, she has

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20130128173130/http://www.takeninhand.com/could.this.kind.of.relationship.be.for.you>>

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never heard him raise his voice to anyone, and has only become angry a couple of times when he felt someone was treating my grandmother inappropriately.

What it boils down to, I guess, is that I want a man like my grandpa. :-)

Thank you from my heart for this site, and for the opportunity to continue to work out in my own mind what I want. I've come to believe that if you don't know what it is you want, you're not very likely to get it!²⁹

"HOW MY HUSBAND MAKES ME MELT" (31 JANUARY 2005)

My husband does not generally require a lot of obedience from me, but when he does choose to exert his authority, I find myself responding to his firmness quite naturally most of the time. When I do things that I know he wants me to do, or refrain from doing things that he doesn't, I feel I am obeying him voluntarily rather than being controlled.

I quite frequently get irritable or snappy or bad-tempered, but when I do I find that my husband, these days, instead of letting my bad temper arouse his, simply responds with a comment like "You're getting a bit uppity, aren't you?" or "Having one of your little moments, are you?" in a calm and slightly amused way, that I find makes me feel submissive again rather quickly.

I find the ease with which he can subdue me like this slightly humiliating, but in a pleasureable kind of way. And I find it tremendously

sexy. These times feel more as if I am responding involuntarily to being controlled, rather than deliberately obeying. Both states can be pleasureable, but the feeling of involuntary submission is definitely more exciting.³⁰

"CAN YOU BE TAKEN IN HAND IF YOU'RE NOT SUBMISSIVE?" (2 FEBRUARY 2005)

A poster asked:* what is the difference between being submissive and being taken in hand? The poster also asked: can you be Taken In Hand if you're not submissive? To which the answer from the "Taken In Hand is nothing to do with being submissive" camp might be: "If you're submissive, there would be no need for him to take you in hand, would there?" As one man wrote: "It's really sexy to have a wife who perceives it as a ritualistic battle in which the winner and loser is predesignated – kind of like bull-fighting. What's NO fun is having a super-submissive wife." Or as another man put it, "Complete obedience means a man has either a mindless zombie, or a totally intimidated mouse for a partner. Unless one is into sadism, where is the pleasure in such a situation?"

Taken In Hand is not about the woman being slavishly obedient or submissive by default, it more likely to be about the man controlling her to the delight of both. Some women might aspire to be more submissive,

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20120623184729/http://www.takeninhand.com/node/573>>

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but a Taken In Hand woman most likely has no such aspiration.

A Taken In Hand woman is perhaps a bit like a beloved and spirited pony who thrives under her owner's control—she loves her owner and wants to please him—but she needs to be bridled and sometimes tethered or she might get a little out of hand. Sometimes she needs to be stroked; sometimes she needs to be cropped. Sometimes she needs to be kept on a tight rein, sometimes only a very loose one; sometimes she needs to run free in the paddock; sometimes she wants the excitement of a ride on the wild side, galloping wherever her owner takes her. And sometimes she needs to be shut in the stable and not allowed out.

To some people, the aforementioned “pony” counts as submissive despite the spiritedness. For others, submission implies a lot more than that—such as bowing and scraping and service and *all servile softness all the time*—and that idea has little appeal to Taken In Hand women. These people associate submissiveness with being slavishly obedient, docile and devoid of personality—and dominance, with conceited, arrogant, unpleasant men who need to feel the sharp end of Pat's whip (or indeed tongue).

Many Taken In Hand women say that they prefer a man who appreciates the richness and complexity of their whole personality. They want a man who can handle them as they are, rather than one who wants them to be someone else (or indeed a mindless nonentity!) before he will have a relationship with them. (Little tip for men: making obedience

a *sine qua non* of a relationship is likely to lead to disappointment, even if you both agree that obedience is important!)

Taken In Hand inclined men tend to be more relaxed and simply take firm action when the woman gets out of hand. As one such man said, “Whatever happens, I win: either she obeys and I enjoy her submission, or I get out my whip and *force* her to obey, and I enjoy my control and breaking her resistance.” In fact they both win, because she is just as thrilled by the whole thing as he is.

If that counts as being submissive then there is no difference between that and being taken in hand. If you think that a submissive woman should “lose her ego” (which in this context appears to mean *her personality*), obey without question, no matter what, and at every turn put herself down and beg her man's forgiveness for the most trivial mistakes (and not because they both find that exciting), then there is a world of difference between being submissive and being taken in hand.³¹

“TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?” (5 FEBRUARY 2005)

Last year I blasted my boyfriend with the news that I, a strong, independent businesswoman who employs many men, want to be taken in hand and *controlled* by him. He thought I was joking at first, then he thought I must be on drugs, then he went through an angry phase when he would blow up at me about any-

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thing and everything, and refused to talk about Taken In Hand. For a long time, he wouldn't discuss it and got angry when I tried, so I gave up and let it rest.

Then something happened—there was a crunch point—and he started taking control. He did have the ability all along, he just needed time to adjust to the idea that the woman who was so bossy could want him to be the boss. He thought about it, made his mind up, and then took decisive corrective action at that crunch point—and started taking control.

We both found this unbelievably sexy, so I encouraged him to take more and more control. Then more and more and more. We got a bit carried away with it and now we're at a place that's not where I wanted to be. It feels like we're playing a 24/7 *game* of control, and it doesn't feel good. Also, my boyfriend now gets short with me and accuses me of trying to control him with nagging and complaining when I express an opinion or speak to him as an equal. I feel I no longer have a voice, that my wishes and feelings count for nothing any more, and that I can't continue in this relationship if this is how it's going to be. I never wanted to change my character into that of a servile sweet submissive (that's not who I am), and now that's what my boyfriend appears to expect and require me to be.

I'm feeling like a servant and I don't like it. And I'm feeling like myself is no longer attractive and desirable to my boyfriend. Where before, he used to love me for my strong personality and dynamism,

now he finds most of what makes me *me* unacceptable and something to correct. It started out fun, but now it's taken on a degree of seriousness that's no fun in any way.

My boyfriend now exerts control in high-handed ways and in a great many arbitrary and nonsensical ways just for the feeling of control it gives him, IMO. Where the control at the beginning used to be sexy, this is making me feel trapped and wretched. Some of it feels plain mean. But he's not a mean person! So I think we have simply taken this too far too fast and gone a little off course. But how do we get back on course if every time I try to raise a problem I'm accused of not being submissive enough?

I wanted control, and my goodness I've got it. But you can have too much of a good thing, can't you? Please help! I love my boyfriend, but I feel we've gone wrong and I don't know how to get out of this without getting out of the relationship.³²

"HAVE YOU FOUND A PROPER BALANCE?" (15 FEBRUARY 2005)

Somewhere there is a balance between pushing a woman into obsequious servility—thus, confirming Patricia Ireland's blanket accusation of *de facto* female slavery—and allowing relationships to degenerate into dysfunctional verbal head butting and bickering.

That point may exist at different places for different couples. In fact, it may shift in time for a given couple. For example, my wife chose a man she believed to be capable of spank-

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ing her often enough and hard enough to straighten out a few things in her life. Now, almost forty years later, those spankings are more cathartic than disciplinary.

For a relationship to be truly successful, a man has to want what is best for both the woman and the relationship. The man has to be a tough softy—able to both blister a woman's backside as well as be plush-poodle cuddly, depending on the needs of the moment.³³

"IT IS WORKING AS ADVERTISED!" (6 FEBRUARY 2005)

When I first suggested to my husband that we try having a Taken In Hand relationship, I didn't think he'd get it. I thought he'd either think it was a joke, and make fun of it, or use it as an excuse to just order me around all the time.

But neither of these things happened. Instead, it really seems to have worked out the way it's described on this site as being supposed to work: it's made us more open and honest with each other, it's improved communication, it's eliminated stress, it's put an end to the awful rows we used to have.

We don't have a lot of rules and regulations in our relationship, I try much harder to do things that I know will please him, and not to do things that I know annoy him, and he appreciates this and in turn doesn't lose his temper with me any more. If something bothers me I tell him, because that's what he wants. If I'm not happy with something, we can usually reach a compromise.³⁴

"A STRONG WILLED WOMAN WANTING A MAN TO LOSE AGAINST" (8 FEBRUARY 2005)

I am attracted to independence and strength. I am also turned on by submissiveness and vulnerability. I am a strong man who does generally get what I want, but I'll never be able to mesh with a girl who can't take her own life in her own hands.

First, I think that a large reason why women often hide their feelings or desires is that they subconsciously want the man to dominate, but that takes skills that most men don't have, namely mind-reading. A woman who can't come out and fight for her needs can't control her own life. I can not live someone's life for her.

In an ideal dominant/submissive relationship we will both have control over our own lives, but when we clash and the circumstances are appropriate, I won't back down, and I will take control. If she is serious and feels strongly, then she should be able to convey that I need to see eye to eye with her. If she doesn't put up any fight about an important issue then there is a serious problem. And if she wants the excitement, she should start something that she knows she can lose. Or she can drop the right hints and I'll take the initiative, but if they're too vague it's her own fault that nothing happens.

Reading the things on this site have made me realize why my previous girlfriend got so deliciously frustrated when I won argument after argument. I would say something and she would take an oppos-

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ing view that there was little defense for repeatedly. She was a strong willed woman seeking a man to lose against.

I like being dominant, but I don't like living up to unreal expectations. A woman has to take control of her own life and learn how to effectively relate and communicate with people before she is ready to share it with someone. It fulfills my heart to protect and provide, but only when the other is doing what is in her power to carry her own weight. That takes the strength and independence I look for.

I also don't like degradation or violence. If a woman wants to be insulted she can find other company. I think highly of the women I love, and though I am excited by control, I'll use my power to bring pleasure and satisfaction into our lives. Personally I think that women who want that are probably associating negative attitudes too closely with dominant attitudes when it is only the latter that they crave.³⁵

"WE'RE NOT ALL SUBMISSIVE!" (8 FEBRUARY 2005)

It is sometimes argued that if you are a woman who wants to be in a relationship in which the man is the head of the household, you are submissive.

As nice as it would seem if we all had the same motivations, life just doesn't work that way. Are all of the women in the world who are turned on by James Bond or any other masculine male submissive? Do you believe that the world is comprised

of just two types of people, dominant individuals and submissive ones? And that if you aren't the one in charge, then you are submissive?

Heavens, I wonder what all of the people who work for Bill Gates think. They can never be the CEO of Microsoft so they all must be submissive. And if each and every one of them could actually get a shot at being CEO of Microsoft, how many would actually relish the responsibility of that position? If they are not excited by the prospect of running a major corporation, does that make them submissive?

Everyone has their own motivations for what he or she does and how they feel. Motivations are far too complicated to just breakdown into submissive and dominant.

We all eat food. However, in modern society, we no longer eat for sustenance. If we did, there would be no chefs. No one would be overweight. There would be no anorexics. Moreover, there would be no fools eating bugs on reality shows. LOL!

Food can be sensual. It can be hedonistic. It can be a thing of control. It can be a dare. And while we may not understand the motivations behind someone's food choices, we have to accept their motivations for eating as they do, as their own. Neither can we assert, "I like chocolate sauce on my cake. So if you like chocolate sauce, then you must like it on cake as well."

Some women have tried the so-called "equal" marriages and found that they were soon taking on all of the responsibilities. This led to the Surrendered Wives movement. Sur-

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rendered wives designate their husbands as head of the household because they are sick and tired of being the responsible person and they chuck all of the responsibility back on him. It is a case of "Here, you drive". The husband becomes head of the household but are the wives now suddenly submissive?

My motivations for being at Taken In Hand are not that I am submissive. I like masculine men. The egalitarian marriage concept (versus the traditional male-led marriage) is so new that it really did not exist when I was growing up. And I really don't have faith that an "equal" marriage works except in theory. I have never witnessed (in over half a century) an equal marriage. I've seen male head of the household (or "traditional marriage") or female head of the household, or what I call "Tug of War" relationships. In many of the latter marriages, one person suffers silently until they get a chance to finally leave. Then the spouse realises just how bad things had become but it is too late to save the relationship.

People go into marriage with certain expectations. My expectation was that I would be loved, cherished, pampered and taken care of and basically given everything I wanted. I have been free to go to university, to work (if I wished) at anything I wanted, and only have my bottom warmed by the heater in the leather seats of my luxury sedan.

Where do I reside on the Sub/D-om scale? I'm pretty dominant (or as my brother-in-law refers to me, "a bitch on wheels"). My husband, however, is more dominant than I

am. I don't actually submit to his authority but rather accept it. That doesn't interfere with him bringing me my morning tea in bed.

There seems to be the impression that the Taken In Hand man holds a stick over the heads of the rest of the family. My husband has a quiet commanding presence. I don't live a life of oppression. I am not a slave. I am not subservient. My husband does not issue commands. He doesn't bark orders. He handles all of the mundane things in life that I am not especially interested in (like finances and planning our future). I don't see that I have given up anything except a lot of agro and responsibility for things that don't interest me. He doesn't really control me, as I have plenty of self-control, thank you. We have the same values and morality and agree on almost all issues. I have input in his decisions, we just don't row over differences in opinion.

He never asks for my permission for anything, as I see in so-called "equal" marriages. If he wants to buy some toy, then he would just do it. If he wants to have sex, he would never verbalise it. If he comes home after I am asleep, he will wake me. He has the assumption that I *always* want him. And I always do. I'm mad about the boy.

Oh, and I don't particularly care for cake. I personally prefer chocolate sauce on my husband and custard on me ;-)³⁶

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"IS THE MAN'S AUTHORITY REAL IF CONSENT CAN BE REVOKED?" (10 FEBRUARY 2005)

Why do I crave a Taken in Hand relationship? In my relationship my husband's authority is very important. It is this authority that I find attractive in him. For me it is very important that his authority be real. My husband can exercise this authority by exercising final say on what ever he feels he needs to. In a sense he gets the last word. (Unfortunately for him he does not always get the last laugh!)

Does the fact that I consent to this authority make it any less real? I do not think so. I consent to my husband having the final say on the basis of trust. But if he were to blow it and break that trust, then consent could be revoked. That does not mean the authority does not truly exist.

Take the military for instance. In Canada we have a voluntary peacetime military right now. If you choose to join, choose to sign up, choose to swear to obey, then you become part of the military. You are responsible to the military for your actions. If you break military law, and disobey orders you can expect to be held accountable for this. But you can quit—you can revoke consent to the military as an authority. This analogy cannot be carried too far, because there can be times when the choice to get out of the service is not yours to make. I know that the sexual relationship I have with my husband is not anything like the military, but I think that the consent

to authority is very similar. (But not nearly as sexy, although I used to have thing for guys in uniforms. ;-)) While consent is in place the authority is very real.

We connect well as a couple because of the real trust and authority my husband has in our relationship. It is not a game for us, although we do play with it sometimes. Even in fun the authority is real. I think that is way makes the fun we have with our Taken in Hand relationship work. If it were just a game for us that we only played in the bedroom, it would lose its power to move us.³⁷

"A SWORD-WIELDING FEMALE WARRIOR TAKEN IN HAND!" (10 FEBRUARY 2005)

Hi, my name is Lil' Red and I am a recovering control freak and brat. I gave up control a little over a week ago, still working on the brat part (sigh)—I think that is going to take a really long time. If someone would have told me a month ago, when I was screaming at my husband about divorcing him, that I would ask him to take me in hand, well, let's just say I would not have reacted well at all.

I was a female warrior embracing the Cossack/Irish/Scottish/N-ative American parts of me and conveniently forgetting the Quaker ancestors. They just didn't fit in with the sword wielding vision of me.

I was determined to be smarter, stronger, and tougher than any man. As a child I learned how to throw a wicked spiral and swing across ravines on vines and climb any tree

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faster and higher than any mere boy, why I was Super Tomboy. Give me Superman's flying abilities or Spidey's webs any day, just not that stupid wimpy lariat of truth that Wonder Woman carried around.

At eighteen I met my husband and the first couple of years were heaven, well mostly anyway. I became almost (gulp) feminine. I loved wearing dresses and putting makeup on for him and even, dare I admit, felt an intense surge of feminine power the day my natural wiggle got him out of work six hours early! I was on top of the world; I realized I could be a girl even if I did throw a football better than my husband.

Then life happened and stress landed on our doorstep; neither one of us handled that very well and our relationship started going downhill. For years we pulled ourselves back up by our boot straps and things would be just peachy... for a little while. I forgot all about being a girl, I turned back into that wanna-be super hero female warrior, better than all men. For fourteen years we struggled with my need to prove myself better than everyone, including my husband (I was sure he was at fault for *everything*.) Every couple of months things would take a downward spiral and I would tell my husband I was leaving... again, which is what I was doing a month ago.

My husband made a timid pass at me and I freaked out when he became upset about it. I was leaving and that was that, we talked, we cried and we even laughed as we discussed divorce. There are chil-

dren involved so they had to come first. We cried some more and I was heading for the door when something miraculous happened; my husband stood up to me and called my bluff. Need I tell you how quickly I was back in his arms?

Last week in the middle of sex play I told my husband I wanted him to be more dominating and I wanted to become an obedient wife, he of course obliged, for the night, (he's a wonderful man.) The next day I searched the web and discovered Taken In Hand and sent him an e-mail at work. He promised to read it and did. Thus started the discussions and after reassuring him that I did indeed know this is truly what I want we started a new and vastly approved relationship.

We discovered that several times throughout our 16-year relationship we had played at me being taken in hand. When my husband gave me a direct order to do or not do something, I automatically obeyed and when he powerfully instigated sex I never had a "headache." Hmm... that should have been a clue there.

So, we've started this journey and I've given up control of just about everything, I guess some would call it micromanaging. The amusing part is I am a million times happier.

I'm trying to stop my need to be smarter, stronger or tougher than my husband. In fact, we have the exact same I.Q. He has proved several times this week he is stronger and in a contest of wills, well, he won there also.

I'm now a non-flying, non-web shooting, non-super warrior. I've retired my cape and replaced it with

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a dress, not because I have to but because I *can*. I am back to adoring my husband and being a girl.

I do, however, still throw a wicked spiral! (LOL)³⁸

"IN DEFENCE OF BOOKS LIKE *FASCINATING WOMANHOOD*" (10 FEBRUARY 2005)

I love books like *Fascinating Womanhood* by Helen Andelin, and *The Total Woman*, by Marabel Morgan. I have studied *Fascinating Womanhood* and even written to Mrs. Andelin. I am currently rereading my thrift store copy of *The Total Woman*. And, one you might have overlooked is Darien B. Cooper's Christian book, *You can be the wife of a happy husband*.

I am a stay-at-home wife. I have approached the subject of working a couple of times when finances were tight, and my husband has always insisted that he wants me home.

I have always wanted to please, and had a desire for a man who lovingly takes charge. It makes me feel more centered, secure and safe. However, before reading these books I was also very opinionated, self-centered and bossy. I couldn't figure out why I was always pushing away the very thing I wanted.

Applying the principles of these books—they are all pretty much the same, just worded differently—has not made me into something I am not. It has just brought out my feminine nature and allowed me to soften my rough edges. These books have helped me to get a different perspective on my husband and thereby better meet his needs. In

turn he treats me differently—the way I have always desired to be treated. There is much less contention in our home. And because I take an interest in my husband's activities, he allows me plenty of time and money to pursue my own.

This has made it possible for me to stop being so overbearing, and for my husband to develop his more dominant side. Nature will always fill a vacuum. When I quit taking charge he started taking charge himself.

There are some things in all of these books that do not apply to my marriage. For instance my husband loves me in dresses but he also likes me in jeans—unheard of in *Fascinating Womanhood*. So I think the key when reading these books, is not to use them as an authority on what a relationship should be, but as an enhancement to the relationship you already have. Take what applies and leave the rest. Nothing is cast in stone. I manage our finances just because my husband doesn't like being bothered with them (against Laura Doyle's advice in *The Surrendered Wife*) but he pays the bills and has the final authority.

Each relationship is unique because the two people that make it up are unique. There are no cookie cutter rules that will work for each one. However, new ideas keep things fresh and exciting. I always want to work to become a more pleasing partner. These books are simply one avenue through which to get ideas. I like picking them up for motivation when I get bored or start slipping back into my old ways.³⁹

**"SHALL WE DANCE?" (11 FEBRUARY
2005)**

My dear husband rented the new Richard Gere movie *Shall We Dance?* for me this week. I must say I loved it. I mean, it was Richard Gere in a tux, ballroom dancing—what's not to love? I also always enjoy the movies that show long-term marriage with children in a positive, sexy light. Two things really stood out for me in this movie.

First, I was actually somewhat troubled by their lack of concern for where the other partner is. He goes into the studio on a lark and ends up staying for the class, all evening. When he gets home he finds a note that his wife has gone shopping with their teenage daughter and they will be home at 10. At one point, he stays for rehearsal and dinner with J.Lo and then more rehearsal, and never calls his wife. I think that this is just the condition of their marriage. They both seem to have very demanding job with habitual long hours and they just lead largely separate lives.

What troubled me was that I think this is a very real state of affairs for many families and I find it kind of sad. No wonder the divorce rate is so high—how can you stay connected when you don't even see each other every day? I also found it kind of odd that he felt he couldn't tell his wife that he wanted to take ballroom dance lessons. But I think he was just afraid of seeming ungrateful.

And then I remembered that I have always wanted to take dancing lessons and have never told my hus-

band because I thought he would think it was dumb or would refuse to do it with me. In addition, their relationship is still really good and it gets so much better by the end of the movie, it makes up for it. They come together in a very realistic fashion.

The second thing that really struck me was that ballroom dancing is a beautiful metaphor for a *Taken In Hand* relationship. The man leads, yet the whole point of the dance is to show off the woman. She is held, protected and admired as she is held, and protected and cherished in a good *Taken In Hand* relationship. He is dashing in his tuxedo but it is only a backdrop for her beautiful eveningwear.

He is leading but that doesn't make her part any less important. Her misstep will foul them up just as quickly as his will, and she must make every step he does. He decides where they will go but she must choose to go with him, he cannot force her. The waltz is graceful and romantic and a couple doing it right looks as though they are floating across the floor.

It looks like a romantic, effortless fantasy, but the reality is that hours of intense work go into every step, every pose, every head tilt, every nuance. It requires sensitivity, connection and attention to your partner. But when it works, they are like one unit and it's breathtaking. Sometimes I think I have this romantic picture of what a *Taken In Hand* relationship (or any relationship) can be, but I must not forget all the hard work that goes into developing that rosy picture.

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Oh, and here's the really happy ending to this story: inspired by the idea of telling my husband what I want so that he can make me happy by giving it to me, I told him that I would love to take dance lessons with him and he said that sounds like fun! He has always wanted to be able to dance! Yay!⁴⁰

"CONSENT, CONTROL, CONNECTION" (12 FEBRUARY 2005)

As I look back on my past relationships, I see a trail of dismal failures. I blamed all these failures on a myriad of perceived defects, some of which were closer to the truth than others. The main reason eluded me until recently, though, when I discovered through rather intense contemplation that the distinctive defect in each was a lack of connection. Without connection there is no real communication, nothing of real essence, anyway.

There was one woman in my life, however, who showed me how I can make such a connection, and now, three decades later, I think I finally learned my lesson from that relationship. This connection came from a high erotic tension that was born of my control over her and her consent to that control. I wasn't aware of the dynamics at the time because it was all so natural and easy from the time we met.

When I first saw her a spark flew between us that felt like an earth-shattering explosion. A friend of mine introduced her to me. I wanted her badly, with every fiber of my being, and I told him so. We argued

about her intensely, and I'm not sure I was even in full control of myself at the time. It was as if some flow or force was pushing me to do and say the things I did. I have no memory at all of what I said, but my feelings went beyond "I want her" and rose up to "SHE IS MINE!!!" I won the dispute, and without violence. He was gone and she was with me, and the feeling that accompanied that was almost orgasmic.

During the time we were together, I was never fully aware of the control I had over her. I never told her to do anything. I rarely had to ask her to do anything. She did what I wanted, frequently to my surprise, before I was fully aware of what I wanted.

Before her and after her I have had relationships with women who never quite connected with me the way she did. In the beginning of each, though, the encounters were erotic for me because I had the illusion of control for a short period of time. When the illusion wore off, so did the erotic connection, and along with it, communication. Of course, when communication dies, so does the relationship.

I know now that if I have a love interest in my life, I must control her and she must consent to that control. Without that, there is no erotic connection and nothing to feed the relationship, which will then shortly die.⁴¹

"IS TAKEN IN HAND A FORM OF BDSM?" (12 FEBRUARY 2005)

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The Taken In Hand relationship is a consciously and consensually male-controlled sexually and socially exclusive monogamous marriage in which the man's power is real and for the purpose of creating a deeply connected, fully engaged relationship with a white-hot sexual connection. How the man expresses his control is an individual matter, but it is for the benefit of the relationship rather than being purely self-serving, and it is active rather than passive. Having power over his wife, the husband *puts his wife and the relationship first*. The Taken In Hand wife responds positively to her husband's active control.

While some Taken In Hand couples think of themselves as being very far out along the flat of the Bell curve in one way or another, many think of themselves as conventional and tend to be unfamiliar with or *positively turned-off by* BDSM literature, perhaps because of the exhibitionism, exotic language, customs and rituals of BDSM, or because they have no interest in narcissistic- or self-serving-style dominance, humiliation, sadomasochism, bondage, "service", submission, bondage, "slavery", or having sex with multiple partners.

Many Taken In Hand couples think of what they are doing as being more about the conventional idea of the man wearing the trousers in the relationship, than about anything kinky. Indeed, Taken In Hand can sound boringly conservative and conventional to anyone with a penchant for some of the more elaborate, painful, ritualistic, exhibition-

istic, theatrical, humiliating SM or D/s practices.

On the other hand, Taken In Hand often seems hardcore, extreme, dangerous and scary to those who don't like the idea of the man's control being real instead of stylised or confined to set times and negotiated scenes (as one dungeon mistress has said).*

To put Taken In Hand in perspective in BDSM terms, perhaps Taken In Hand intersects with BDSM at TPE.⁴²

"A SMALL BUT TOUCHING ACT OF KINDNESS" (15 FEBRUARY 2005)

My husband did the most amazing thing and I don't think he even realized what he did. I have these dishes that his mother and other female members of his family all went in together on and bought for us for a wedding present. They are hand-made pottery and it's a huge set (16 dinner plates, 8 salad plates, bowls, platter, gravy boat, dutch oven, etc.) so I know it was very expensive.

The thing is, they are also really heavy and I have terrible repetitive stress injuries in both wrists from carpal tunnel and years of handstitching. So when I was using these dishes, I would have almost

* [Editor's note: This is an FAQ question; please bear that in mind when posting on this thread. Ensure that your post answers the question. It is fine to write about what Taken In Hand is for you personally, but more general answers to the question (or answers containing more general information) would be particularly appreciated. ...]

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constant pain in my wrists from loading and unloading the dishwasher. So I boxed them up and we have been using plastic for a couple years. My excuse (which is true) has been that the kids are small and I don't want to risk breaking the others, plus they are too heavy for any of my kids to carry (the oldest at the time was six).

Now my youngest is two and I am starting to think about getting rid of most of my plastic and getting some "real" dishes. But if I go buy a new set I know that every time my mother-in-law comes to visit I will hear it... and hear it... and hear it... etc. I think she believes that if someone gives you a gift, you keep it forever and cherish it unless you decide you don't like that person anymore. So I have been having all this guilt about wanting to get rid of these dishes because we don't have the space to store them and I am never going to use them but then I don't want to deal with her hurt feelings, on and on and on.

So I was telling my husband about this. I say, "I want to get rid of them, but then what do I tell your mom? You know she is going to be insulted, no matter what I say about why I got rid of them and I hate to hurt her feelings because they were a really lovely gift and I picked out the pattern." He just looks at me and says, "Stop. Don't worry about it. I'll tell her I don't like them."

I know it sounds like a really small thing and it is in a way. But it was also so touching to me. It just said to me that he was on my side. He was willing to protect me from the rude comments she's going to make and

from the guilt trip that she'll try to lay. It was just a reminder that his main concern is my peace of mind. I felt so cherished and protected by him. I think that I spend so much time thinking about my own submission that I forget what he brings: his protection. It was like being reminded of the other side of being Taken in Hand and of why I love this man.⁴³

"TAKEN IN HAND - INTIMACY AND ROMANCE" (16 FEBRUARY 2005)

This Valentine's Day I took my wife out for dinner. Not only was it Valentine's Day, but it is also the anniversary of the day I proposed marriage to my sweetie. As we sat down to dinner, I couldn't help but notice all the other couples sitting in the restaurant. Some of the younger ones spoke quietly, smiling at each other and seemed to be genuinely in love. Then there were the other older couples, who, except for a few exchanges sat there in silence, lost in their thoughts, looking around the room, appearing to be bored.

I really have no idea what they were experiencing, but I couldn't help reflecting on my own relationship. How new and fresh it felt. In my mind there was no one in the room more beautiful than my wife. She was wearing a close fitting, but not tight, black dress and the ruby earrings I had given her for Christmas. On this night she wore her shoulder length hair up on her head with a few wisps of hair curling around her ears. She looked fantastic!

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After we left the restaurant we walked hand in hand down the street, occasionally exchanging a kiss, happy to be in each other's company. And this feeling was not just because it was a special day. It is something I experience almost every day. It always brings a smile to my face when I first see my wife after a day's work is done. I love coming in through the door, seeing her face, giving her a smooch, and a pat on her behind. (All right, maybe several pats on the her behind, but who is counting?)

The love and desire we have for each other remains strong after almost seven years of marriage. Could that be a result of me taking her in hand? I really think so. I am not discounting other factors of attraction and compatibility, which are essential for a good relationship. Of course, there are many couples whose love has endured over the years without them ever having had a Taken In Hand relationship. But I truly believe when a man possesses the confidence and authority to take his woman in hand it creates an intimacy like none other I ever experienced. This intimacy grows out of the kind of respect and trust that I think is inherent in a relationship where the man knows that she belongs to him and she loves the feeling of being his woman.

Through our growing intimacy we have come to understand the genuine need we have for each other. In a recent conversation with an online friend, she asked why is it that people do not want to admit that they have a need for another person? She pointed out that when looking at

internet personals how often she reads that a man or a woman is looking for an "independent" type, one who will respect their space, as if it is too much to admit the longing we all have for intimacy. Is our independence and self-reliance so valuable that we can't admit to a most basic need common to us all?

As many of us know, when a man confidently leads and his woman gracefully submits they discover what so many in this world want—the intimacy of a lasting romance. This is what taking my wife in hand has done for us.⁴⁴

"VIOLENCE IN THE GARDEN" (17 FEBRUARY 2005)

*The locus of fantasy of a lucky man holds no robots; of a lucky woman, no predators; they reach adulthood with no violence in the garden. — Naomi Wolf**

We have an indoor cat, and so each morning, as a special treat, I carry our little gray tiger in my arms as I walk through the wildly disorganized jungle that my neighbors mistakenly call their garden.[†] As I

* Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 140.

† [After being approached by a well known Third Wave feminist author who saw some of her work in the usenet news group alt.sex.bondage, Polly Peachum wrote "Violence in the Garden" for inclusion in a collection of Third Wave feminist essays. The book's stated purpose was to demonstrate that women can be feminists while also living lives that appear incompatible with traditional feminist principles. While the editor of the book loved the article and called it one of the strongest pieces in the collection, she

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take my tom along paths lined with flowers almost a foot taller than I am, beside a dark stand of pines, and back around the magnolia tree and through the weedy grass to the struggling tomato patch, I often find myself daydreaming about who or what might be hidden in the vegetation, watching me with hungry eyes. In my “unlucky” imagination, the dark, fertile garden is populated with predators. Behind every bush, lurking just out of sight within the shadows, is someone stronger and more brutal than I, someone who will overpower me and bend me to his will, someone who will cruelly torture or humiliate me just to see me blush, whimper, or scream with pain.

It is a wonderful, thrilling daydream, and I live a less feral version of it in my daily life. I spend my life as a full-time slave within a heterosexual sadomasochistic relationship. To many, I know that this must

make me seem to be a self-destructive, abuse-loving victim. That view is neither right nor fair. My jungle daydreams (and my hardcore reality) represent the living out of sexual desires that are for me far more positive than—albeit radically different from—what most people consider to be healthy or even sane.

I am not alone in having these kinds of dreams. According to a study mentioned by Naomi Wolf in *The Beauty Myth*,* Dr. E. Hariton finds that 49 percent of American women studied have submissive fantasies. Like me, they have dreams of being captured, spanked and whipped, controlled, used like a toy. But because sexual dominance, submission, and sadomasochism in general are looked upon with horror and distaste in mainstream society, most people with submissive sexual fantasies, women or men, stop at the level of fantasy. I have chosen, however, to turn my fantasies into reality, and in doing so, I have made my most cherished dreams come true. I believe myself to be the happiest and most fulfilled person I know. I am certain that I owe my happiness to one simple fact: I have pursued and embraced my deepest desires instead of ignoring them. I have become the person whom I feel I was always meant to be, the person I needed to be. I am reasonably unconflicted, reasonably at peace with myself, and vibrantly alive. I have accepted my passion for submission absolutely as the healthy, life-affirming, and wondrous choice

decided, under the influence of other doctrinaire feminists, not to include it because the life and ideas it describes are too controversial (or “sick,” as one of her advisors put it) and would turn unwanted media attention on that single essay instead of on her book as a whole. Apparently, women whose life styles resemble Polly’s are not worthy of notice, let alone defense, by mainstream feminists. I include this article not to suggest that what Polly describes is anything like the typical Taken In Hand relationship, but because her article may speak to all those whose desires and chosen paths in life attract disapproval from others — which of course includes many seeking or in a Taken In Hand relationship. - The Editor]

* Naomi Wolf, *The Beauty Myth* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 141.

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that it is for me. In the six years during which I have been living the dream, I have never once regretted my choice or cursed my perverse desires. In fact, I consider myself to be one of the luckiest people alive.

I suspect that many women must see me as a downtrodden tool, duped by a man into doing what women have done for men in most cultures from time immemorial: serving, obeying, and sexually servicing them. I see myself, in contrast, as a conscious, intelligent, and intrepid individual who has dared to do what few women attempt: I have taken an enormous risk, rejected almost everything that the organs of society have told me should make me happy, and deliberately pursued that which I knew inside would actually make me most happy. And I have succeeded.

My success was hard won and all the more dear to me for that. No one in this culture grows up being told that being a slave is a good thing. No one is encouraged to become a servant or praised for her subservience. If you are a child with such desires, you learn to keep them from your parents. As you grow older, you hide them from your playmates. And if you, like me, reached puberty in a time of growing feminist consciousness, you may even have learned to keep them from yourself. But in the end, hiding your true sexual desires from yourself never works. Like the proverbial bad penny, one's sexuality always comes back from whatever faraway land it's been banished to and must, sooner or later, be consciously dealt with, even if the conscious decision

that results is to be aware of but to ignore one's urges.

Many of the women who, like myself, have gone beyond the fantasies and are active submissives struggle with the apparent contradiction of these desires with what society at large—and some doctrinaire feminists—tells us is good for our mental and emotional health. Resolving this contradiction is central to our sense of self-worth and humanity. Is what sadomasochists do, think, or desire wrong, as so many would certainly demand? If so, why do we want it so badly?

The emotional and intellectual conflicts that a submissive must resolve while learning to accept herself involve a wide range of issues beyond the core question of Am I sick? These are questions such as Must I repress parts of my personality in order to be a submissive? Can I ever get angry? How I can I take pride in myself as a strong woman and as a feminist if I am always at my master's beck and call? In my selfish desire for sexual satisfaction, am I perpetuating violence against women? What happens if I am ordered to do something I really fear or hate and I am incapable of doing it? I may believe that my desires are OK, but how can I live with other women's hatred of what I represent and—even worse—their pity for me?

The reality of my life is deeply shocking to most people. Among active submissives, I belong to the rare subset that lives the dream 24 hours a day, absolutely and completely, without breaks, time-outs, or respites. In the sadomasochistic sub-

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culture, this is referred to as life-style submission. Since the moment I gave myself away to another, I have taken my slavery very seriously. It is as real to me as if it were legally sanctioned, perhaps realer, as many legal slaves refused to consider themselves as owned chattel. Although no court would uphold my master's ownership of me, I consider our master-slave relationship to be far more binding than any legal document, because we decided together that we would both make it so. When I gave myself away to my master, it was with the explicit understanding that I would not be able to leave the relationship no matter how much I might later want to. In our arrangement, only he has the power to dissolve the bond of ownership, and this will remain true no matter how unhappy I might become. I have not once in six years become so miserable that I have wanted to leave. If I should feel that way at some point in the future, however, my master has promised me that he will carefully observe me and our relationship and try to resolve its difficulties for a long period in order to determine if leaving is really the best thing for me. If, after many months of careful observation, he believes that my unhappiness with him or with the relationship is a permanent condition that could not be fixed by either of us, he will release me. But he will not release me from slavery to him immediately if I should express such a desire. I cannot just walk out of the relationship. If I did, he and I both know he would have every right to get me back by whatever means he could,

as I really belong to him absolutely, and not just when it is convenient for me to belong to him.

Although relationships like mine are not unique, in many other power relationships that I have observed, the couple does not take this aspect of ownership to the extreme that we have. The concept in these relationships is that the slave is continually giving her slavery to her master. That "gift" is constantly renewed with every moment and can be taken back by her whenever she wishes. Doing this would probably end the relationship, but ultimately both partners want the slave to have the final say, the final veto, and ultimately, absolute power. To me, such a relationship would be a sham, much as a child's "let's play house" game is an inconsequential and unreal imitation of an actual family, with all of its moral responsibilities and legal obligations. I would never have consented to such a sham slavery. Yes, certainly, I could gather up our little cat and then drive off in the car, never to return voluntarily, but the truth is that I will not, ever, do this. I have committed myself to being this man's slave for as long as he should want me to be, and that commitment, that decision to give myself away, is sacred to me. In a culture where marriages, the priesthood, and other commitments that are supposed to be permanent and sacred are broken as easily as we change our minds about what to wear to work, many people find this concept of absolute dedication difficult to understand or to credit; they don't believe that it really works. But I know myself to be a person capable

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of keeping such a commitment, and so does my master, and that's all that matters. The opinions of others on the actuality of my slavery have about as much affect on it as a swarm of suicidal moths has on the ability of a campfire to stay lit. The moths' effect, if any, is—in a very small way—to feed the flames of my dedication.

My life with my master is very tightly controlled. I must try to obey every order given to me, and on the few occasions when I disobey, I am severely punished. My actions are not my own, except during those limited times when my owner allows me to act freely (for example, he has given me permission to write for this publication; had he refused me permission, you would not now be reading this). My dreams are not my own, nor are my thoughts: I must reveal them to my master upon demand.

All the money I make is immediately turned over to my master, and he decides how or when it is spent. Likewise, all my former personal property, everything I used to call my own, now belongs to him. I must get permission for all major actions and for many trivial ones. For example, if I want to buy a new suit or take a new work contract (as a high-tech consultant, I do projects for a variety of clients), I have to get his permission. At home and often when I am away, if I want to use the bathroom, I must again get permission. I am not allowed to leave the bed at night without permission; in fact, I am tied each evening to the bed by a rope attached to a collar. If I am invited out for drinks or dinner

by someone I work with, I must get permission, and often orders are given about the quantity and kinds of food and drink that I may consume. My owner requires me to do most of the housework, to exercise regularly, and to come immediately when he commands, no matter what else I might be involved with. Spankings, whippings, and other physical “abuse” are a recurring part of my life.

Although I am bound by the many rules that control my behavior, my everyday life, on the surface, resembles most people's. I keep my sexuality absolutely hidden at work, and while the occasional perceptive coworker will guess that my partner is “controlling,” that's as far as it ever goes. We are “out” as master and slave only to other sadomasochists and to those very few of our straight friends and acquaintances whom we trust. Although this is not so for my master, I have discovered that the only people I really want to become good friends with these days are people who share my sexual practices. Submission is such a big part of my life that friendships in which that aspect of myself must be hidden feel incomplete, almost dishonest. My master is out to the immediate members of his family; I am not out to mine, primarily because I am estranged from them and cannot trust them. I left my family and my friends behind when I moved across the country to live with my master, and since the move, sadly, I have acquired many acquaintances but no close friends (it is difficult enough to find good friends when you have all of humanity to choose from; when

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you limit your selection pool to a small fraction of that, the search for simpatico people takes much longer). Although I am actively searching for new friends, I have resigned myself to the idea that this search may very well take years, if not decades.

Despite the fact that I am searching for my friends among other sado-masochists, I have a suspicion that the friendships I do form someday will probably be with sexually conventional people who have the understanding and compassion necessary to accept me as I am. The other kinky people that I meet are often disappointing because it so often turns out that the only thing we have in common is what we do for erotic excitement, and that is never enough to base a friendship on.

My relationship with my master is able in many ways to compensate for my lack of close friends. Unlike the cold and forbidding routines which are so often the lot of fantasy slaves in erotic literature, our everyday life is full of intimate, loving rituals, combined with a dash of sadism to keep things interesting. On an average morning, I am awakened by my master at the time he decides I should get up, usually between 5:30 and 6:30 am, even on weekends. I tell him my dreams from the night before, and, as I am usually still half-asleep after this recital, he lets me "float" for a few minutes before untying me from the bed and sending me off to use the bathroom. Our morning wake-up routine includes a number of other activities which we do purely for fun: an in-bed wrestling match, a

morning song, a wake-up spanking, and a head over heels "airplane ride." I then go to make breakfast, collect the newspapers, and take my little cat for his garden walk. After a leisurely breakfast, I clean up the dishes and do some other morning chores. With those out of the way, my master has a brief planning conference with me to discuss what I must accomplish that day. During these conferences with my master, as with all our conversations, I am allowed—in fact, encouraged—to make any comments or suggestions that I wish, but the final decision on what I actually do that day rests with him. If I am working on contract, I either dress and go to the client's or go into our home office to begin my work. If I am not working that day, what I do depends upon what my master wants to get done and also on what I would like to do. I may run errands, I may clean house, I may write email to my electronic pen pals, or I may simply settle down in an easy chair with a good novel. Like conventional couples, we take vacations to the mountains or the shore. The crucial difference between what I do on an average day and what a person living a conventional life does is not in the kinds of things that I do but in the fact that whatever the activity, I must first get my master's OK. Another difference is that, when I am at home, whether working or playing, my master will interrupt my activities many times during the day with orders for me: to get him lunch, to fetch him something from another room, to listen to him read me a news story, to have another plan-

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ning conference, to bend over and be caned, and so on. It could be anything. At night, after dinner is cleaned up and all my evening chores are finished, we will often do something together before bedtime, such as watch a TV show or play a game of cribbage or backgammon—or something more intensely sado-masochistic. When it is time for bed, I participate in another set of playful rituals. Just before lights out, I am tied to the bed and blindfolded. I am usually sound asleep within 10 minutes.

My tightly structured life with its heavy workload and the never-ending requirement to obey may seem intolerable to most people, but I reap many rewards from it. I am madly in love with my master and he with me: he understands my special needs and complements them perfectly. Within this relationship exists a level of intimacy that I haven't experienced anywhere else. It is so comforting to be able to tell—in fact, to be required to tell—one's darkest secrets to someone else: someone else knows all of this; I am not alone. My master is a gentle and compassionate dominant, and there is a strong healing aspect to our relationship. He supports me, builds me up, makes me feel good about myself, but never lies to me. I have absolute trust in him. I find that the longer I live with him and the better I know him, the more time I want to spend with him.

No matter how benign the rule, no matter how eroticized the physical pain, the question remains, however, of why anyone would subject herself to outrageous violations of her per-

sonal freedom. Part of the explanation is purely sexual: giving away control, having no say in the major or trivial decisions that affect me, provides me with a continuous low level of erotic excitement. I am always slightly turned on. Beyond that, most life-style submissives, including myself, include something that I think of as a “service ethic” in their personalities. I long to serve. I love to bring my master pleasure by doing his bidding. At no time in my life have I been unaware of that service ethic.

As important for most of us female submissives as the joy of service is intimacy: experiencing extremes of pain and humiliation at the hands of one's dominant creates an intensely intimate bond. This person can do anything to me. I have absolutely no defenses against him. My soul is stripped bare and on display before him. This intimacy is frightening in its intensity. The trust required to experience it is prodigious. But submissives who have felt it within the context of total powerlessness describe it in ecstatic, almost mystical, terms. For us, the admission price of fear and vulnerability is well worth paying for a ticket to heaven on Earth.

These are some of the general features of submission valued by myself and other submissives. But just what a submissive feels, what turns her on, surprises many people. The tediously conventional answer, often said with a snicker in the voice, is “whips and chains,” but for me, the richly idiosyncratic sensations, fantasies, and impressions that excite my erotic imagination and bring my

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submissiveness to the fore are practically endless in their variety. They include the intoxicating smell of new leather; the sight of someone dressed entirely in black; the thrilling touch of cold steel restraints against my skin; watching a pair of gloves being slowly drawn on; the pungent and humiliating taste of my own juices on a pair of fingers being forced into my mouth; hard, sharp sounds, such as a club coming in contact with a golf ball, which remind me of wood or leather being brought sharply to bear against flesh; the terrifying sensation of blood trickling down the back of my leg; the vision of someone slapping a riding crop rhythmically against his hand; the acidic taste of fear accompanied by a crazy leaping sensation in the stomach; the intent eagle-like expression found in the eyes of certain dominants; a slap on the face; a hand at my throat, gently squeezing, threatening; the sight of a needle as it passes through skin; the unique sensation of lying on the floor with a boot pressing down on my head; an intense, embarrassing, goose-bumpy awareness of one's nakedness in front of a group of fully clothed people; being forced to kneel, crawl, or grovel; being forced to assume the classic slave position of head to the floor, bottom raised to expose the buttocks and genitals for my dominant's amusement; an inability to catch my breath and an aching pain in my mouth that come from giving forced oral pleasure; the sound of my beloved's laughter in response to my screams of agony; the close embrace of a locking steel collar around my neck; the taste of a leather whip that

is shoved against my lips to be kissed or licked. The life of a lifestyle submissive at its best is a low-level—and often not so low-level—phantasmagoria of erotic stimulation, profound intimacy, and intense awareness of specialness.

Such a life, obviously, is not lived unexamined. The questions that submissive women ask themselves, the internal colloquies which they engage in, arise from the cultural sea which surrounds them: the submissive's questions are the inverted accusations of society. But are these accusations fair, or do they embody myths that most people believe simply because it seems the right or obvious thing to do? The myths themselves must be examined. Do the assumptions made by conventional society about submissives match the submissives' personal experiences? The motives of those who publicize myths and negative attitudes about submissive sexuality must also be examined by the female submissive in search of her own acceptance of her needs.

The mythic female submissive is weak, unable or unwilling to make decisions, because she does not want to bear the normal burdens and responsibilities that other adults bear, or because of a pathological need to be dependent upon the dominant. She and her dominant are said to form a particularly violent and sickly codependent relationship.

As is often the case with popular beliefs about people or things we are uncomfortable with, the belief in the weak female submissive is often the exact opposite of the reality. In fact, most people would be incapable of

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full-time, life-style submission no matter how much they might desire it, because they simply don't have the strength of personality required. Most people, when they think of a submissive, picture a rubber-willed, weak little doormat whom everyone, not just a particular dominant, can walk all over. The truth is that while there are certainly some weak submissives, who fit the rubber-mat profile, there are also many weak people involved in conventional, non-kinky relationships. Self-destructive people exist—period. Some are drawn to sadomasochism, most not, but they will go wherever they must to find affirmation of their worthlessness.

Weak individuals are a minority among conscious female submissives and are especially rare in life-style, permanent relationships, for a number of interrelated reasons. Most important among them is that people involved in life-style submission tend to take their sexuality and their potential partners very seriously. A lot of careful evaluation goes on, both by the submissive and by the dominant, before a union, especially a permanent union, is formed. It would be awfully hard for a weak or self-destructive individual to hide such tendencies from an experienced dominant, as signs of pathologically low self-esteem are one of the primary traits that an experienced dominant looks for—in order to avoid—when getting to know a submissive woman (healthy male dominants avoid self-destructive submissives because dominants are interested only in an actual exchange

of power, and power is not something that a self-destructive submissive has much of to exchange). Successful life-style relationships require a measure of strength and unselfish giving that a person obsessed with getting her negative sense of herself confirmed has no energy for nor interest in. Absolutely sincere obedience, the kind that resonates in the soul as the required action is performed, is rare and, even if you have a knack for it, is extremely difficult to cultivate. Only an individual with a good grasp of her own strengths and a positive opinion of her abilities is capable of learning obedience in the form required in an absolute master-slave sadomasochistic relationship. Only a very strong and stubborn personality will have the ability to stick with it when the going gets rough: when she doesn't want to obey or when orders are given in a humiliating fashion, perhaps in front of others whom she wishes to impress with her independence.

Another feature of the weak-submissive stereotype is that submissives “escape” into a life-style relationship in order to avoid adult responsibilities and decision-making. I can't speak for all life-style submissives, but I certainly didn't volunteer for a lifetime of slavery out of a need to have my decision-making taken away from me. I was 30 years old, had been living on my own and making decisions for over 12 years, and was having not the slightest trouble fending for myself before I became involved with my master. In fact, giving up decision-making was particularly difficult for

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me. I was used to making decisions in my personal relationships. I was used to being among people who liked me to make the decisions, and I had grown to trust my own judgment. Trusting someone else to make decisions about the relationship, let alone about me, that are as good as or better than my own was very difficult to do, and only lengthy experience with someone who actually is as competent as myself has eased my mind in this area.

(Closely connected with the stereotype of a submissive as a weak doormat is the image of the dominant as a manipulative, selfish, and immoral predator on weak people: a person who cannot form a relationship with someone his equal. While some people are attracted to the dominant role out of personal insecurity, out of the belief that the only way they can attract and hold a woman is by dominating her, successful life-style dominants do what they do out of a deep wellspring of confidence which tells them that what they do is profoundly right: that this is what they were meant to do. It is a mirror image of the submissive's feeling of being "home." Experienced members of the S&M communities know how to differentiate between a wannabe dominant doing it for all the wrong reasons and the real McCoy. Insecure people who are not really dominant show numerous clues, and these traits can be spotted by experienced submissives, just as experienced dominants can spot individuals with severe self-esteem problems posing as submissives.)

A crucial question about ourselves that most female submissives must contend with, and a particularly important one for feminists, is whether we, in our selfish desire for bizarre sexual satisfaction, are perpetuating violence against women. Sadomasochistic sex is commonly seen as ritualized violence: impersonal, brutal, dehumanizing, and objectifying. It is said to perpetuate hostility toward women and to turn the paradigm of loving, intimate relationships on its head. It is seen by many as amplifying power inequalities between men and women and promoting a form of sex that is cold and emotionally distant. These ideas are multifarious and must be looked at piece by piece.

Does conscious submissiveness have anything to do with cultural inequality between the sexes? It doesn't seem so to me. On the Internet, the international computer network, is a section where people can post personal ads for those interested in sadomasochistic sex. Typically, the posters of such ads reveal their dominant or submissive orientations. Most messages posted here are from submissive men looking for dominant women. (This is not definitive information, of course. Many factors affect the willingness to search publicly for sexual partners. But the reality as represented on the Internet does not support the idea that the roles played in sadomasochistic sex reinforce sexual stereotypes--nor does any other available information.)

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According to *Different Loving: The World of Sexual Dominance and Submission*,* "Sexuality theorists traditionally have held that men are more likely than women to have sadistic sexual fantasies...that women are more likely than men to have masochistic fantasies. No evidence, anecdotal or otherwise, supports these conjectures. Indeed, submissive men are the single largest component of the [sadoomasochistic] communities, and widespread male interest in submission is an observable phenomenon." Some of the belief that female submissiveness perpetuates stereotyped sex roles and violence against women is no doubt rooted in confusion about violence. Those who believe in the perpetuation myth assert that when one person hits another person hard enough to cause pain, this physical act, irrespective of whether the person being hit has asked the hitter to do so and is taking great pleasure and satisfaction from it, is violence in the same sense as a rape or mugging or spousal abuse. Neither the intent of the person being "abused" nor that of the "abuser" matters at all. But what about the submissive woman who eroticizes pain and force? If these are things that she wants, that affirm her from day to day and raise her to ecstasy at times, can they in any way be compared to the brutal violence forced on a desperate and unintentionally helpless victim?

The belief that female submissives take part in relationships that are impersonal and dehumanizing is particularly appalling. Those who so believe tend to be individuals who have no experience with female submissives or with sadoomasochistic relationships. Some experience with such people and relationships would teach them that the people in long-term sadoomasochistic relationships tend to be those with considerable conventional sexual experience who find it lacking in intimacy and intense personal communication (for example, I had a small number of short relationships, one 12-year relationship with a man, and one relationship of two years with a woman before I became an active sadoomasochist). Submissive women generally find that sadoomasochistic sex allows a deeply felt intimacy and closeness that conventional sex doesn't approach. The "consensual nonconsensuality" that is central to conscious sadoomasochistic relationships requires a profound and even radical level of honesty and communication between dominant and submissive if it is to function successfully. Successful sadoomasochists have learned to practice this hothouse honesty as a matter of course. Submissives who are unwilling to share what they really feel or who are actively dishonest as the whip falls or as the humiliation commences are avoided by experienced dominants and, in any event, generally fail as submissives (similarly, dominants who are dishonest and uncommunicative are dangerous and tend to fail as active dominants). Trust and honesty, the cornerstones of intimacy,

* Gloria G. Brame, William D. Brame, and Jon Jacobs, *Different Loving: The World of Sexual Dominance and Submission* (New York: Villard, 1993), 10.

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may exist in a conventional sexual relationship, but nothing within the dynamics of such a relationship requires them in any high degree of either individual. Because these qualities are mandatory among successful practitioners in conscious sadomasochistic relationships, impersonality in such relations is simply impossible. Similarly, dehumanization, although it is often used by dominants as a technique to produce erotic fervor in a submissive during sex, dooms a life-style sadomasochistic relationship to an early end if it is a reflection of the actual attitude of either partner.

Yet despite the reality of being a female submissive, so much warmer and fuzzier than suspected by the unknowing, requiring such self-confidence and emotional strength, so exquisitely fulfilling, virtually every female submissive struggles, sometimes recurringly, with the question of whether her sexual and social tastes reflect serious pathology, perhaps involved with early physical or sexual abuse. I have certainly struggled with that idea.

Someone who knows my tastes and attitudes very well once gave me a little button that reads, "I've been reduced to THIS!" I like it very much, but I'd like to modify the button a little to make it read: "I've always wanted to be reduced to THIS!" as this wording aptly describes the story of my life.

I don't know if I was always submissive, but some of my first memories, beginning at age five, involve submissive acts and thoughts. I was the little girl who always wanted to serve the other kids I played with. I

remember games in which I pushed my sisters around in a little toy wagon to the point of my own exhaustion, while thinking all the time of how comfortable they were and how much fun they were having thanks to my toils. I loved being able to be of service to them. With my parents I felt similarly but much more strongly. I glowed when they gave me things to do to help them around the house, and I accepted most punishments, when they came, with unquestioning obedience. Punishment held, even at that age, a distinctly erotic thrill. I was being physically corrected by someone stronger and wiser than myself, and that was not only just and right but also terribly exciting.

As I grew, I started to have explicitly erotic submissive fantasies: I'd make up stories about being a captive or a servant, forced to do extremely embarrassing things and endure painful punishment from those older and stronger than myself. These fantasies always excited me: they never made me feel evil or guilty. I think I assumed that all little kids dreamed of being chased naked in a circus arena by a swarm of bees trying to fly up their bottoms as the crowd laughed uproariously at such a shameful and painful predicament.

Around the age of nine, I tried consciously to engage the children I played with in master-slave games in which I, naturally, was always the slave. But while most kids loved the novelty of being the master, of being in charge of someone for a change, I seldom found any playmates who liked the game after the first few

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times we played it. I, of course, could play it all day if they cooperated, and I felt titillated while obeying my Lord's or Lady's increasingly outrageous demands. Paradoxically, when I actually learned some facts about sex in my early teens, the constant and powerful sadomasochistic themes that had pervaded my childhood faded into the background. Perhaps this was because I was too busy trying to learn what to do on a date; perhaps it had something to do with the fact that I, a voracious reader, had discovered feminist literature at the tender age of 13, literature which strongly suggested that fantasies along these lines were not appropriate. Whatever the reason, my submissive urges became, at puberty, much less conscious than before, only emerging at night, as an accompaniment to masturbation. But even at those times, I did not associate these fantasies with myself or my needs; they were just something I did while jerking off.

For years my sexual fantasies and inclinations went consciously unexamined, at least by myself. At age 17, an older acquaintance gave me a copy of *Story of O*,* the classic sadomasochistic novel of the 20th century, to read, saying simply, "I think you'll find this interesting." I devoured the book, and it formed the basis for my fantasies for years to come, but I smothered any speculation about why she might have given me that book. I simply did not want to think about it. In retrospect, my denial seems amusing and also

understandable. Try to imagine a precocious teenager taking community college classes and living with two male graduate students 10 years her senior. A true child of the Seventies, her curriculum includes a women's-studies class taught by a lesbian and a touchy-feelie human-sexuality class, in which sadomasochism is mentioned briefly in a five-minute talk about variations and fetishes and then never brought up again. Yet she comes home each night and spends 40 to 60 minutes kneeling on a hardwood floor at the foot of a bed, massaging her politically correct, ecologically conscious, and sex-role-sensitive roommate's feet, until he falls asleep! And the time she spends doing this is the most thrilling, exciting, and intimate part of her day. Once again, in a limited and socially acceptable way, I got to relive those thrilling times in childhood when serving gave me such pleasure. But sexual submission was just not something related to me. I did not reject it; I simply did not think about it—except as a nighttime fantasy.

I did nothing more about my fantasies till six years later, when, at the age of 23, I tried to spice up a five-year relationship by telling my boyfriend incidents from *Story of O* while straddling him during our lovemaking. He became so turned on by my stories that, to my great delight, he surprised me one day by tying my arms to a hook in our dorm-room ceiling. He then beat the living daylight out of me with a switch he had cut outdoors, degraded me, and attempted anal sex with me. This first genuine experience

* Pauline Reage, *Story of O*, trans. Sabine d'Estree (New York: Ballantine, 1980).

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with forced submission thrilled me to my core, but the next morning, when my boyfriend saw the bruises on my hips and buttocks, he was absolutely appalled. His guilt at having caused these marks to appear on his lover's flesh prevented him from ever doing anything that "sick" with me again, despite my assertions that I had loved it.

Once again, my awareness of my submissive desires seemed to go underground, but they never were quite as buried as before. During the six years that I spent with my boyfriend after that one submissive experience, I'd listen to music by Frankie Goes to Hollywood and the Eurhythmics and actively fantasize about being captured, beaten and abused, and made into someone's masochistic plaything. But I took no action.

An awareness of my relationship to submissiveness may have been slowly moving toward consciousness during those years, but it took a catalytic experience, an epiphany of sorts, to bring home to me the fact that I am a submissive. I was almost 30 years old and had been seeing LuAnn, a woman I had worked with for nine months. She was an avid reader of popular fiction and had made me aware of Anne Rice's Vampire books.* While reading them I was strongly affected by and attracted to the power relationships between a vampire and his chosen victims—really, between a centuries-

old, experienced vampire and a young, recently human protégé. In my usual steamroller reading style, I went on to read everything Rice had ever written, and I eventually stumbled upon her erotic novels, written under the pen name of A.N. Roquelaure.† It was then, as I began to read about the erotic fairy-tale adventures of Beauty, wakened from a deep slumber by a rape and a spanking, that I was suddenly roused from my personal slumber to make the essential connection: this is me. I am like this fairy-tale character. I am a submissive, and I want nothing more than to be someone's slave! Bingo. The penny dropped. The trumpets blared. I went directly to Go and collected \$200. There I was. But where was I? Was I nuts and just didn't know it? It didn't feel nuts. It felt right.

At that time I had no idea of how few people viewed sadomasochistic relationships as acceptable for others, let alone for themselves. It really hurt to learn, as I quickly did, that LuAnn was utterly unprepared to accept my self-discovery. I was suddenly isolated, had no idea of where to turn to meet people who shared my new interests, even to talk to someone who would not be repelled by my feelings. Like many people in my lonely circumstance—till later I had no idea how many—I turned to the computer nets for relief. Alone in

* Rice, Anne, *Interview with a vampire* (New York: Ballantine, 1989).

---, *The Vampire Lestat* (New York: Ballantine, 1985). 6. Roquelaure, A.N.

† [Anne Rice], *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty* (New York: Dutton, 1983).

---, *Beauty's Punishment (Sleeping Beauty)* (New York: Dutton, 1984).

---, *Beauty's Release* (New York: Dutton, 1985).

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my apartment, I learned how to attach a modem to a computer and discovered the world of on-line communications. I also quickly found, thanks to some surprising assistance from my ex-boyfriend, the kinky areas on the BBS'es and the commercial on-line services that I subscribed to. Here I began to meet other submissives and dominants. I left long, probing messages about my sexuality and within hours received numerous replies and private electronic letters. I got to know a number of people, even "played" with a few over the computer. I learned that the kind of total-immersion, or life-style, submission that I craved was not what everyone involved in sadomasochistic sex wanted. In fact, most people I met on line seemed satisfied with doing a little S&M with their partners in the bedroom or over a weekend and then returning to a conventional relationship of equals after these relatively brief "scenes." I, on the other hand, was certain that I wanted nothing less than absolute, never-ending slavery.

I searched among the people I was meeting on line for my dominant counterpart: someone who wanted to dominate and control as much as I wanted to submit and be controlled. Eventually I found him—actually, he found me. After a long correspondence, numerous phone calls, and several meetings lasting many days, I was thrilled to be given the opportunity to give myself to him in slavery. Although he could have ordered me to become his slave, and I would have obeyed instantly, he wanted this to be my choice—and

my final free decision. I thought very carefully about it for several weeks, and up to the second when he told me it was time to decide, I consciously considered the idea that I had a choice, that I could back out. Even though I didn't want to back out and all of me was screaming for the experience of slavery, I was still very aware that up until the second I gave myself to him, I had the power to remain free. I wasn't brain-washed; he hadn't talked me into anything. On the contrary, I had been actively and aggressively searching for him, or someone like him. It was my decision, and it's been the best (and last) serious decision I've made.

When I first met my master on line, I expected to be manipulated. I expected bravado and show, masking a bottomlessly insecure ego, just as I had found in so many men whom I had met or had had relationships with. He had told me in one of his first electronic letters to me that he was a healer, someone who helped unhappy people to get better emotionally. In fact, when we first began to talk, he made it clear that although he was attracted to me, he saw me as someone he could help rather than as a potential lifemate. At the time, he had a slave whom he was happy with, and although that relationship later ended (he had chosen to end several earlier life-style dominant-submissive relationships which he had found to be unsatisfactory for various reasons), he was not "trolling for slaves," or trying to add me to some sort of sadomasochistic harem. He healed on an informal basis, he said, not

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charging the people he helped for his services, because he had a passion for it, a vocation. This all sounded so vague and New-Agish to me. I felt the same suspicion I would feel for someone who announced that he was a witch or that he could communicate with the dead. I assumed that this so-called healing was probably his ego outlet. And so I tested him.

Not really believing he could help me emotionally (no one in my life had been able to help me—any accomplishments or growth I had achieved had been in spite of the people around me, not because of them), I issued to him, without fully realizing that this was what I was doing, a challenge. In response to his healer message, I said in effect, and rather cynically, “Sure, Mr. Healer, you’re welcome to do your thing all you want, but don’t expect any fancy results from me.” Much later, my master told me how he had chuckled over this “uppity” statement of mine and how he knew, even before we began, how quickly I’d change my mind. How did he know this about me? Having read my public messages carefully, and having a wide range of experience with people, he already knew that I was bright, motivated, and very sincere about my desires for submission. He also knew by then a lot about my personal problems and hang-ups: the things I wasn’t facing, the assumptions about life that weren’t working for me, my fears and sensitivities.

Realizing, as I soon did, that he knew so much about me was only the first of many extraordinary realizations I was to make about him

over the years. As the master-lover-slave dynamic was slowly added to the healer-patient dynamic, I began to realize that everything he had said about himself, even those things that sounded as if they had to be idle boasting because they were too good to be true, was accurate and genuine. He really did have an immense confidence in himself and a positive attitude toward undertakings, which he was able to convey or project to people he was trying to help. He really did take responsibility for everything he did, and he always kept his word. If he said he was going to call me at 7 pm on Tuesday, he did. He had an absolutely steady personality which was unafflicted with mood swings and invulnerable to conversion syndrome (after reading this last sentence, my master said with his usual sardonic humor—he fancies himself a latter-day Oscar Levant—“Another way to say that is that I’m a fanatic”). He had enormous emotional strength and maturity and a baffling lack of emotional hot buttons. He was not overcome when terrible things happened in his life, nor was he strongly angered or upset by anything I did. Most refreshingly, he did not take either himself or anything in his life too seriously, and he constantly poked fun at both—something that an egotist posing as Lord Sir Omnipotent Dominant Of the Universe is incapable of. These strong personal traits have allowed my master to be reasonably successful, and sometimes very successful, in almost everything he has undertaken. In five decades of living he has been a writer and an editor of newspapers and

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magazines; a writer of books; a photographer, actor, and musician; a small business owner; and a labor organizer and civil-rights worker. In addition to all of these paid occupations, he has always found time to counsel people who come to him for help and, more often than not, to help them to effect in themselves profound personal change. Finally, he has been a staunch feminist for decades and was fighting for the rights of women long before they became fashionable things for men to pay lip-service to.

Six long and wonderful years have gone by, and I am extraordinarily happy with the choice I have made and the course my life has taken as a result. Were I given the opportunity to decide about becoming a slave again knowing everything I know now, I would choose identically. Looking carefully at myself as I am now and at the person I was before I became a life-style submissive, I can say that my experiences as a submissive have enormously enhanced my life and in some ways completely turned it around. Without my master's experienced guidance, I don't believe that any of this would have been possible. Six years ago I was incapable of pulling myself out of my self-made quagmire. I was very overweight and steadily gaining. Although I had a moderately interesting job, my own apartment, and a lover, I was at loose ends. I was deeply dissatisfied with myself and felt impotent, powerless to change a life that was perfectly functional but stuck in emotional neutral. I had my little satisfactions, things that made me happy, but most of these had

become vices. I drank almost a six-pack of beer every evening while eating my enormous dinners. After months of this bodily self-abuse, I could barely drag myself out of bed each morning and into work. I often called in sick and felt tremendously guilty for doing so. I liked to correspond with people over the computer, but this, too, quickly became an addiction. I bought every beauty and fashion magazine as soon as it came out and spent hours enviously gazing at the beautiful models and dreaming of looking like one of them. Like eating and drinking, trying to match society's ideal of beauty was one of the ways I avoided confronting the real problem: the barren, unfulfilling aspects of my life. Oddly, I considered myself to be happy.

Now all of that has changed. I lost the weight I needed to lose on a slow and healthy eating and exercise plan (I wouldn't even call it a diet—it was so moderate and inclusive). For the most part, I no longer have a compulsion to overeat. I no longer drink heavily, nor crave drinking as an escape. I rarely read a fashion magazine these days, as the women in them no longer strike me as that attractive or desirable to emulate—in fact, I sometimes find myself thinking, when staring at one of those grotesque, heavily made-up bags of bones that these magazines so love to promote as the pinnacle of attractiveness, that it's a pity that poor scaggy model can't look more like me! I am no longer dissatisfied with my career: I make things happen. Unexpected results of my own unconscious making rarely sneak up

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on me, as they once regularly did. I'm not avoiding the knowledge of the effect that my actions have on my social and work environments any more. My subterranean efforts to sabotage my life have ceased. I don't believe that I am trying to escape or avoid any aspect of my life. Most importantly, who and what I am is no longer a dark mystery to me. I've discovered who I am, what I want from life, and am learning more each day about how to get it. I no longer let people walk all over me, and I can do things—like express anger to strangers—that were inconceivable to me six years ago. My low-level, ongoing emotion has changed from one of mild depression to one of happiness and peace with myself. I am no longer searching for a place in life; I have come home.

As much as my master has helped me to heal and grow, I have done most of the hard work myself. But what has allowed me to develop the power to change my life in such important and positive ways, when people can spend decades in formal therapy without getting these sorts of spectacular results, is that I am finally doing what I was meant to do, doing what I need to do in my life. I am living and experiencing, in a positive, sane, and unharmful way, the fantasies I've had for years of ravishment, violation, loss of control, erotic suffering, and degradation. After years of trying to understand just why I have been able to achieve all I have, I have concluded that when a person finds where she belongs or finds something she really loves to do, a lot of negative be-

haviors, including entrenched habits, may fall by the wayside, the superficial symptoms of a deep dissatisfaction with life.

I believe that I became a submissive in spite of my environment and experiences, not because of them. I have the kind of background that turns people into emotional basket cases, not sexual submissives. My father was an alcoholic who died before I reached puberty. While he was alive, he alternately abused me physically and emotionally and spoiled me with love and attention. After he died, I spent months crying myself to sleep with loneliness. Bad as he was, he was the one in the family who had given me a sense of myself as someone special and loved. (I am aware that my life as an adult in some ways is an acting out of my relationship with my father. I am also aware that for me it is a healthy one and that much more is involved in my sexuality than child-like re-enactment.)

Shortly after Dad's death, my mother dragged me out of the public-school system and sent me to Catholic school. The effect of our family constantly moving around and my going to a new school each year, in addition to the recent shock of losing my father had had its effect on me by then, and I was a pathetically shy, insecure child. I stood against the wall of the playground, watching the other children play, and made up hurtful fantasies about why I was never asked to join in the fun. I was too stupid; I was awkward. My family was too poor. I was a stranger. I was not as good as they were.

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And then there were the nuns. Take an already insecure child with a very poor sense of herself and set a vicious and embittered pack of half-crazed emotional abusers loose on her, and watch the blood fly!

During those tortured years, my mother worked at a low-paying teacher's job to try to support a family of six. Her exhaustion and disappointment in her life left her emotionally distant and entirely oblivious to my misery. Although I was an intellectually and creatively gifted child, I developed a sense of myself which contained almost overwhelming elements of inferiority and defeat. I felt helpless, that almost everyone else around me was more powerful or more intelligent than I, that I could not do anything, and that I was incompetent to handle life in many ways simply because I was a woman like my mother. While I knew deep inside that my male classmates were not, in almost every case, more intelligent than I, I discounted my ideas and opinions as worthless next to theirs, abetted by my teachers. My large creative resources were put to heavy use inventing reasons for why the boys' thoughts were always better than mine.

My emergence from Catholic school, terribly wounded, left me facing puberty and my first genuine sexual experience, a rape at age 14, unarmed. And with this marvelous introduction to the wonderful world of sex under my belt, I passed through my teens and most of my 20s as frigid as the North Pole. The feminist literature which I began reading at that time gave me idealis-

tic hopes about how things should be—how I, as a strong young woman, should act and feel—but I was in no position to put such ideals into practice. I had no experiences of success on which to build. But I was still alive deep down there, with an unshakable core of optimism, a stupid, unflinching hope that things would work out for the best. It's as if I had and have a metaphorical core of steel in me, raw and unforged, but nevertheless unwilling to give way. I know that I managed to keep a place in me safe from the awful things that life threw in my way, safe from the cruelties of the world. In that place I was happy, in that place I had hope for a better life, and in that place I lived my fondest and most intimate sexual fantasies.

My history is difficult but far less difficult than some and in no way different from the backgrounds of millions of women whose submissive feelings, if they have them, are unimportant in their lives. Yet many of these women, in a nearly infinite variety of circumstances, are unhappy, confused, at a loss—and I am not. Paradoxically, I have discovered how to act on my feminist convictions, how finally to make them a real and practical element in my life, during the last few years, which I have spent in slavery to a man. The basic theoretical premises of feminism, as I have seen them, are that women are as capable as men; that women ought to have as many rights, options, and responsibilities as do men; and that it is deeply wrong that anything should or should not happen to a woman simply because she is female. Femi-

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nism, as I have been living it during the last six years, has been bound up with the parts of my personality that were affected by sexist cultural attitudes. My becoming a practicing feminist (as opposed simply to believing in feminist ideals) has involved learning to believe that the lessons I learned as a child—that I was inferior, incapable of accomplishing anything important, that my opinions weren't valuable or important, especially when compared to a man's—are not true and acting as if they aren't true.

I work as a contractor in the field of high technology: an extremely risky and competitive career. I have no job security, I don't know where the next assignment or project will come from, and yet I am very successful at what I do. Part of the reason I get the jobs is that I have confidence that I will get them. Although I work in a technical field in which men predominate, I don't believe that the men who compete with me for contracts are any better than I am. I don't believe they'll get the jobs instead of me. And they usually don't. My confidence in my own abilities allows me to persevere in an environment where many people give up in despair due to the large number of rejections inherent in this kind of work. This confidence comes not entirely from my feminist reading, which, although it laid the groundwork, could not, given my background and expectation of failure, be put into practice, but also from the support and nurture that my master has given me. He believed from the beginning that I could do exceptional things. He

knew that what was holding me back was not any lack of ability but my own lousy expectations. He helped me to see myself as a strong and competent woman. He also taught me how to succeed and how not to ignore and brush aside as meaningless past successes. I now feel ever stronger, more competent, and just better about myself than I ever have, and I expect these feelings to grow for a long time to come.

My experience of living within a power-exchange relationship and my acquaintance with other sado-masochists have also provided me with an important skill which gives me an increased sense of mastery over my life and environment. I have acquired a deep insight into the fact that power is a part of all relationships, whether professional, political, or personal, and I use that insight on a daily basis to satisfy more fully my personal and professional feminist ideals.

Most people are unconscious of the primary role that power transactions play in their lives. They don't realize when they are giving power away or when it is cleverly wrested from their grasp. They don't always know when they are taking it from someone else. Being oblivious to the power exchanges that occur in everyday life, people often base their actions and decisions upon false assumptions which ignore an important part of reality. Because dominants and submissives are constantly dealing with power directly and consciously in their primary relationships, it can sometimes be shocking to them that other people don't see this dynamic as clearly as they

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do. This awareness of interpersonal power dynamics has changed my life profoundly: I know how to handle most people. I can sense how situations are going to develop and therefore can predict when it is realistic to give up and when it is realistic to push on through.

These developing skills have come to my aid often. Once, for example, a manager I did a project for clearly appreciated my skills and experience but occasionally would insist that I had made some obvious mistake when I had not. I realized from the way this drama played itself out (he insisted he was right and at first refused to look at clear evidence showing that his assumptions were incorrect) that I was doing too good a job for his comfort and that he needed to perform this correcting every once in a while to reassure himself that he was still in charge of the project. Understanding this underlying power dynamic allowed me to do two things. I offered minimum resistance and backed down in those cases where his thinking that he was right would not adversely affect our work; this allowed him to feel in charge of the project again. But when the error he was making would have had a strong impact on the success of the project, I calmly stood my ground in spite of his escalating anger and accusations that I had "lost it," and I continued to point out the facts to him until he eventually saw what I was getting at. At heart, this man was rational, and, knowing this, I had the perseverance to wait out the emotional storm until his rationality returned.

Had I been unconscious of the ways in which people use power without knowing what they are doing or why they do it, the kind of behavior exhibited by this manager might have pushed my personal-integrity button (How dare he mistrust me; how dare he doubt my word about this issue!), and I might have walked off the contract and, master permitting, never returned. Knowing what was going on inside his head, however, made my personal indulgence in indignation unnecessary. Thus, oddly, my submissive sexuality has helped me to overcome emotional limitations that were once imposed by my history.

The relationship of my history to my sexuality is mostly obscure. It must be understood that, although theories—many of them preposterous—abound about the reasons for an individual's unique sexual needs, none of these theories has proven to be generally valid. And so, inevitably, it is futile to try to measure a woman's sexual needs against an arbitrary and unproved standard of psychological "normalcy." Even worse, less humane, is to imagine that an individual's sexual needs have some generalizable political meaning. Dr. Ronald Moglia, the director of the graduate human sexuality program at New York University, says in an interview in *Different Loving: The World of Sexual Dominance and Submission*,* "There's so much we don't know about how our

* Gloria G. Brame, William D. Brame, and Jon Jacobs, *Different Loving: The World of Sexual Dominance and Submission* (New York: Villard, 1993), 15.

sexual desires are formed. People often perceive sexual behaviors in a political manner. A lot of our behaviors are as a result of our social-cultural leaning and influences, and certainly, in women, that's a great force. But to then take that and apply it to people who act in a masochistic way—or in any other particular kind of way—makes me question how scientific the observations are, how politically biased the observations are, and what [such people] would say about the sadistic female that's appropriate and the masochistic female that's inappropriate." Nevertheless, the hostility of mainstream society, and of many feminists, to sadomasochists, and particularly to submissive women, is overwhelming.

That's one of the painful ironies of being a female submissive. Even after struggling with all the emotional confusion and political ambiguity engendered in one with strong submissive desires and finally reaching some level of internal resolution, she faces hatred and dismissal coming from most of the people among whom she must live and function. Hostility seems inevitable from an unthinking mainstream that regularly lumps sadomasochism with pederasty and bestiality as utterly beyond the pale—after all, this is the same mainstream that bathes in racism and sexism while denying both and which is rapidly and mindlessly destroying our planet. The hostility of a majority of high-profile feminists, however, is much more difficult to stomach.

Why are so many doctrinaire feminists, including some with high

public profiles, so hostile to submissive women? Their explanations, as noted above, center around the idea that the relationships that submissive women enter promote male cultural dominance and that images of submissive women, in sadomasochistic erotica and elsewhere, promote violence toward women. In *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*,[†] essayist Jessica Benjamin

* A notable exception to the almost overwhelming feminist response of condemnation of sadomasochism is Jessica Benjamin, whose sympathetic, though flawed, Freudian analysis of the motivations of dominants and submissives (Benjamin, Jessica, "Master and Slave: The Fantasy of Erotic Domination" in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, & Sharon Thompson [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983]) appeared in print over a decade ago. Her analysis of why people choose erotic domination and submission is flawed because it is based entirely on a fictional account of sadomasochism, *Story of O*, which real lifestyle dominants and submissives often laugh at as being a patently false and misleading, albeit erotically exciting, representation of the complex emotional realities of their relationships. What I find most interesting about Benjamin's analysis is that the environment of feminist hostility that she described so clearly in 1983 is still with us, virtually unchanged except for the fact that some reactionary feminists are now, terrifyingly enough, in a much better political position to act on this irrational hostility.

† Benjamin, Jessica, "Master and Slave: The Fantasy of Erotic Domination" in *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*, ed. Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, & Sharon Thompson (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983), 282.

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says, "The danger has always been that women and other victims of violence will be blamed or will blame themselves for "provoking" it. This has led to an attitude of counter-blame: the discussion of erotic domination or rational violence in which participation is voluntary or fantasized seems to some an apology for male violence in general." But the first objection—that dominant-submissive relationships promote male dominance—even if it were true (and I do not believe that it is) denies the importance of the positive experiences of submissive women like myself as we live with and live out our sexual identities. And the second objection—like similar ones raised by censors and reactionaries of many stripes and over many centuries—is unsupported by honest data and is discredited.

I suspect that a low, vile hunger for power masquerades behind all of this righteous concern over the political meaning of my or my submissive sisters' activities and for our personal welfare. There is something incredibly arrogant and frighteningly Third-Reichish about a reasoning that goes "Because my own personal opinion of this form of sexuality is that it is terribly wrong and causes harm, it is therefore terribly wrong for everyone else and should be attacked and repressed."

Feminism, for me, has always been at its core about giving women freedom to make choices for themselves, not about taking that freedom away for their own good. I've had enough of patriarchal society doing that for me; the victim theorists and anti-pornography feminists of the world

trying to deprive me of my right to choose freely the kind of sexuality and life style that will make me happiest are no better. In fact, because they have in a sense hijacked feminism, they are worse. Such people, in their attempts to define and control people like myself who don't fit into their mold of the healthy heterosexual, are, in their need to control and shape others' destinies, simply following in the patriarchy's footsteps, and I will certainly not exchange my hard-won freedom from institutional male power for slavery to an equally odious and jarringly wrong—for me—female power. I want feminism to help me achieve my goals of freedom to choose and freedom to pursue happiness—not deny me them.

In the final analysis, I believe that the pressure that female submissives feel from some feminists stems from a fundamental misunderstanding of the fleeting nature of their political power by those feminists. Barely 25 years ago, discussions of feminism and its practical meanings were mostly academic. Today, however, through ideological agitation in academe and a newfound skill at influencing the media and some elected officials by addressing them with the hot-button shorthand that impresses them, feminists have been able to exert a certain effect on practical political dialogue and even to wield some political power. Some of them have quickly begun to use this power to repress, as in the campaigns, successful in some places, to ban erotic and pornographic materials because they are asserted to promote violence toward women. In these

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campaigns they happily unite on this single issue with the Christian right and other hard-core reactionaries, who have a repressive agenda far more substantial than that of a few self-important feminist ideologues.

What such feminists do not understand is that when their momentary vogue is past, when academe and politicians have lost interest in them and have moved on to the next fascination, the Christian right will still be there, the more powerful for having duped and been supported by some feminists. It is from that Christian right, and not from sadomasochists, that the long-term threat to the emancipation of women really comes. If they have their way, then all of us women, including their current feminist allies, will find ourselves or our daughters returned to an entirely involuntary slavery.

I take my little male cat out each morning to the jungle-garden cradled safely in my arms because outdoors, once the natural paradise for a cat, has become, with the epidemic spread of feline leukemia and feline AIDS, a deadly environment. Likewise, I fear that the lush sadomasochistic jungle in which I am so at home is rapidly becoming too perilous to roam. Currently, my beloved could be prosecuted for what he does to me in almost any jurisdiction in this country without my even bringing a complaint to the authorities. If I were to protest and say that I love and encourage what he does to me, that protest could be ignored, and this utterly unfair prosecution would continue. And the current rapid rightward motion of American

politics and its concomitant pressure for ever more draconian punishments—combined with the attention being given to crimes of violence toward women—is darkly foreboding. Thus we submissive women are much less equal than others and have fewer rights under the law, like homosexuals in many jurisdictions. Unlike women satisfied with a conventional sex life, a submissive's body is not her own, and she cannot choose what happens to it; nor is it fully her master's: instead, it belongs to the state, which dictates what can and cannot be done to it, according to political definitions of violence influenced by those who, as women, should be supporting and helping us, not trying to repress us! If we submissives don't replace our rich, wonderful, violent gardens with what would be, for us, the sexual equivalent of a Putt-Putt golf course, we are threatened, should this choice be discovered, with punitive measures taken against the ones we love. And the efforts of certain of those who dare to call themselves feminists are making this condition even more intolerable. What choice have I and submissive women like myself but to reject utterly that which demands our loyalty but betrays our trust and ignores our appeals for open-minded tolerance and support?" Although I will always be

* [Editor's note: I'd like to thank Polly Peachum of *Submissive Women Speak* for kindly permitting me to post "Violence in the Garden" here. For anyone whose desires or chosen ways of life do not meet the approval of those who sit in

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a woman who supports the causes of women everywhere, there may soon come a time, sadly enough, when I will be too ashamed to call myself a feminist, especially if that term continues to grow synonymous, for women like myself, with "oppressor."⁴⁵

"GREATER HUMILITY, LESS DEFENSIVENESS" (17 FEBRUARY 2005)

I have been absolutely stunned at my change in the area of improving and admitting when I've been mistaken. I considered myself to be a very honest and kind person before, however, before beginning a Taken In Hand relationship I would *never* confess things to my husband or admit even to myself how very sorry I was for things I had said to him.

Forget my ever telling him I felt I had not treated him with respect. I was too busy pointing out all the things I thought he had done wrong to me!

This has perhaps been one of the most wonderful parts of our new relationship. I truly feel sorry for the times I do not treat my husband the way he deserves to be treated. When I tell him I am sorry, I feel it. The first time I really felt so very sorry for the way I had treated him was after one of my early spankings. What a relief to be able to tell him I was sorry and wanted to treat him with more respect. Finally I had the necessary trust to do so. I felt so

warm, so satisfied and so loved after this apology to him.

This new relationship has made us both so much closer to one another and has made us both free from so many things that were keeping us from being happy.⁴⁶

"GIVING UP CONTROL IS NOT EASY" (18 FEBRUARY 2005)

My marriage used to be very much like the marriage that Laura Doyle describes in *The Surrendered Wife*. I made most of the decisions through nagging, whining and browbeating. I would ask his opinion and then tell him why mine was better. I would sneak around behind his back if I thought he would "give me lip" about doing something. I denied him sex when he displeased me and I used the martyred opinion that "I do everything around here and he just doesn't appreciate it" as justification.

On one hand, giving up control was terribly hard, and on another it wasn't. The easy part was because I have never had much love for making decisions. As a child, I used to have trouble ordering at fast food restaurants because I was afraid of making people mad or whatever. Even now, I have to talk myself out of doing things because of what other people think.

Also, I have a terrible lack of ability to filter. I can see the positives of both sides to almost any question, even if I don't agree with them. This sounds like a great ability and it's nice when I need to arbitrate a fight between my children, and it is the

judgement of others' choices, this piece is essential reading.]

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reason I am completely accepting of other people's choices, but it is terrible when I just go back and forth and can't make a decision because I can't tell what would be the better way because I can see how both would be good and both would be bad.

So the fact that I don't have to decide whether it would be better to put money in savings or pay off our small debts is a great relief. The fact that all I have to do as far as the decision about what to do with our tax return is put out what I would like to buy with the money and then the decision is his, is a great relief.

What I was really afraid of is that he would be a big tightwad and I would never get to buy anything fun. So, because of this fear, I had big problems giving up the little control. I would buy a small thing or would put a sanctioned purchase on the debit card without getting approval first (I must ask permission before I buy anything that is not food or a household item, no matter how small and I must get permission before I use the debit card).

I got punished for these things a few times but then the last time, he said, "Okay, what is the deal? Why do you keep doing this?" So I explained that I never called to ask permission because I assumed he would say no or that he would think that what I wanted to buy was frivolous. He never buys anything for himself. So he told me that he does want to keep a very tight rein on the budget for these first months that he has control just so he can see where our money needs to go and get a good feel of what we have extra and

also to get some money in an emergency fund, but that soon he will start giving me a monthly allowance. The amount he suggested was many times the amount I would have asked for! I never imagined he would be so generous.

I have felt much better about trusting him with the money now that I know that his past tightfistedness has been due to not knowing what was going on with the money and that he never buys himself anything because there just isn't a whole lot that he wants.

Every control that I give to him is one less thing that I have to think about. If he decides when and whether we have sex, then I don't have to think about whether or not I feel like it when he asks, only if I am physically capable of doing what he asks. If he decides what we will do for our anniversary then I don't have to worry about any arrangements or setting anything up. If he is in charge of talking to people outside of our relationship then I don't have to worry about confronting people.

I was scared to give him that kind of control. I was afraid that he would use it against me. I was afraid that he would take advantage. I was afraid that he would use the power to punish me as an excuse to abuse. Then I remembered that I did not marry an abusive man. If he was abusive, he wouldn't have waited ten years to get my permission. I wouldn't love a man I thought to be abusive so why should I think now that he is?

If he isn't the man I believe him to be, then I can always take back the control. If he is the man I believe

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him to be, he would never abuse me. If he is not the man I believe him to be, I might as well find out now and not waste another ten years of my life.

Anyway, these are the things that helped me get over my fear of giving him control. Now all my misgivings have to do with how society perceives our relationship. I have no doubts that my man is capable and fair and worthy of this control. He likes the power without getting drunk on it and I love letting go of some of my stressors.

He controls anything that he wants to. If he wanted to tell me how to dress, he could. If he wanted to tell me what to do today, he could and sometimes he does. If he wanted to tell me what to eat for lunch, what to make for dinner, what to do with the kids today, he could. He can read my private journal when he wants, as long as he tells me first.

Many things he chooses not to decide on and that stuff is left to me, either because I have the expertise in that area or he just doesn't have much opinion on it. I am perfectly capable of making those decisions. If I need his input I will ask, just as he often asks my opinion.

I have not found that he takes control of things just to demonstrate that he is in control. This is another thing I was afraid of. Everything that he has exerted control over has been for the benefit of us and our relationship.

When I was considering this, my head kept telling me all the things that could happen. I kept thinking of all the ways that it could go wrong and all the ways that he could fail

me. My heart told me that this was what our relationship needed and that Kyote could be the man I always thought he was, if I would just let him.

In the past, if my heart said no and I listened to my head, it was always a mistake, and vice versa. So this time, I listened to my heart and not a single one of my head's fears have come to pass. He has not been perfect but he has done his best and that is all I can ask from him. In fact, my husband has exceeded my wildest expectations.⁴⁷

"BEING TAKEN IN HAND DOESN'T MEAN BEING SILENT" (19 FEBRUARY 2005)

I don't see how it can possibly be of benefit to a relationship of a woman remaining silent in the face of decisions of her husband's that she thinks are wrong. The point about letting someone else make decisions is surely that you believe he is capable of making the right ones, of knowing what's best in a particular situation. If he's made a wrong decision, how can you relax in that situation?

Somebody on a yahoo group told me that she didn't think I was submissive at all, and I think perhaps she was right. I honestly cannot imagine ever attaining a degree of submissiveness where if my husband decided something and I really thought it was wrong I would just let it go. That would certainly not make me feel peaceful, it would just agitate me.

I do not think I would find it relaxing to obey if I wasn't happy to.

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"There are limits!" as my husband has said to me on more than one occasion. He would be as disturbed as I would if I let him make a decision that I really thought was wrong, and didn't tell him. "Why the hell didn't you tell me?" would, I think, be his response.

What I have found is that my husband can make me feel comfortable with submitting to him, by showing that he cares what I think. He expects me to tell him if I'm not happy with something. Rather than being punished for speaking my mind, I've several times been punished for *not* speaking my mind. "You're supposed to tell me things!" he points out. He would not appreciate it at all if I took the view that it will be his responsibility to sort out any problems caused by his decisions so I don't need to bother mentioning when I think he's making a mistake. Remaining silent would be rather callous and inconsiderate, I think. And when he makes a decision about an issue on which he knows we differ, I've found he will often make a compromise decision that I am happy to accept before I've even opened my mouth.

If I felt that I couldn't tell him when I wasn't happy about something, it would just make me sullen and resentful, whereas instead I feel relaxed about saying what I think. In relationships in which there is an element of control, it is surely all the more important for the person in control to listen to the concerns, opinions and fears of the other.

One of the best things about being in a Taken In Hand relationship, as far as I am concerned, is that it has

made it possible for us to be more open and honest with each other, instead of letting resentments build up and explode into rows. If being Taken In Hand meant that I had to do what he wanted all the time without any regard to my own feelings, I don't think it would be a happy situation.

Rather than turning me into a silent, obedient automaton, being Taken In Hand has made me *more* communicative—I talk to my husband more than I used to, and tell him things that I never would have in the past. Silent withdrawal used to be something I did frequently—I was a champion at bottling things up—but now I never do that. If being Taken In Hand were about silent submission, it would have increased the tension between us, whereas instead it has diffused it. Being taken in hand doesn't mean being silenced!¹⁴⁸

"MY HUSBAND AND I FACE THE WORLD AS A TEAM" (20 FEBRUARY 2005)

I met my husband in college. I was dating his roommate, who was my type of guy, I thought—small, fine boned, dark haired, skinny, serious. My husband-to-be was an enormous 6'5, 365lb, blond football playing man's man, loud, rowdy—not my type at all! He had a motorbike. I was into sensitive, artistic kind of guys, who would be able to appreciate my quiet and rather shy nature. (No one would ever call me a ball of fire.) But he was a great friend, full of integrity and kindness, hardworking, funny. Later the "sensitive"

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roommate dumped me—for a feisty red haired older woman!—and who was right there with the comfort? And soon I noticed how nice those blue, blue eyes were, and those shoulders, and it was revealed that he was crazy about me, and it then it was all romance and delightful sex. My family loved him; we got married.

That seems like a very long time ago!

Our marriage was very traditional. We were involved in a Bible literalist church that taught that the husband should be head of the household, wife should be subject. That was pretty much what we saw in our parent's marriages. We never thought to question it, we embraced it, and we thrived. By nature I was submissive, always had been. I have more gumption now, but inside I still feel like that shy girl with the desire to please and make people happy, a desire to give of myself. By nature, hubby was a natural leader. He was president of all kinds of clubs, and even now, he's like that. We just happened to fall into a marriage philosophy that suited our natures, and I am thankful for that.

We have gone through lots of upheavals in life, where my husband would steer the boat through the calmest waters he could find, and I would paddle along for all I was worth.

Hubby was in a near fatal motorcycle accident, he has had long term serious back problems from this. He was in the hospital a month; the financial repercussions lasted for years. It also caused fertility issues, because he was on a catheter for so

long he was scarred and had constant infections for a long time. Hon-eymoon over. Then his father died, quite unexpectedly, and his mother fell apart. We dealt with it. I got pregnant, finally, then bam! I got pregnant again, with twins. Three daughters under two years of age, more bills, ugly nursing bras, piles of diapers, joy and exhaustion.

I suspect that if he had tried to punish me for being grumpy or having a messy house during those years I would have blithely strangled him with a dirty cloth diaper, submissive nature or not. But we were a team, wrangling babies and bill collectors. My behavior was never the issue—I was not “bad” or reckless, or disrespectful, or undisciplined. Neither was he! We were each other's soft place in a hard world. We were often exhausted. One minute we would be snapping at each other, the next we would be giving each other back rubs. Life hadn't really turned out to be quite what we had envisioned, but whose does?

A few years later we adopted the son of a teenaged relative, a delicate, needy infant. Our church was in a state of change, we were counseled not to take this imperfect child... That was the tip of an ugly iceberg for us. We took the baby; he had many developmental delays. He is now a bright healthy 14 year old, obsessed with motor vehicles (and far less moody than our daughters were at that age!) Hubby made the final decision on the adoption, and for awhile I was not sure if we would get that baby or not: he thought about it for days.

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And bam! Another beautiful daughter, a surprise. During that time we left the church, which had changed into a legalistic group. Another big decision that hubby made, but I certainly voiced my concerns and unhappiness. We moved to a small town, another head of the household decision. Then all our parents got sick and died of one thing or another. More upheaval. Also inheritances. Many big decisions were made, and I wouldn't really know which direction he would decide to lead us in, even though we would talk and talk about things, weighing them. I knew he thought long and hard about things. Sometimes a decision would be like walking into the mist....

Over the years then, he has made many decisions that directly affect my life (and work load), but since he is willing to paddle just as hard or even harder, I have never felt resentful or used. It is us against the world, in many instances. Or us paddling a canoe full of whining kids, into some fog.

Consequences, yes we've had those, but usually if one of us screws something up, we both end up paying, because our lives are so meshed together. It is hard to see your spouse paying for your foolish decision or thoughtless act, and we've both been there, but not often. He is the stricter parent, and this is an area of constant discussion. I do understand teenaged girls a little more than he does. I get to make all decorating decisions, because if it is brown, he likes it. I also set the standards for the tidiness of the house because he still has issues

with the laundry hamper. I don't nag, I know what my hair salon bill looks like, after all, and he puts up with that. Give and take.

If he was uncaring, or selfish, or ignored my needs, would this work? I don't see how, because of the trust involved. If I were negligent or selfish, it also wouldn't work. The current is just too fast; you need two strong oars rowing together to avoid the rocks. I don't really see how any marriage can work if one partner is really troubled or selfish, if one does all the giving, another all the taking.

Would I have that sense of togetherness, we're in this mess together, honey, if I saw myself as a problem to him, or he saw me that way, a problem in need of correction? I don't think so. In fact, I think I'd be pretty devastated if he thought I was a problem in our marriage and needed to be punished—that seems so drastic to me. I was his dream girl, later the wife whom he loves, respects, trusts, relies on, and I see myself that way. It would be hard to change my thinking to see myself as a problem to him. That seems so foreign to me. I'm happy with my role, my part of the We Team, and our problems are not so much between the two of us, but what we face together.⁴⁹

"TAKEN IN HAND MEANS DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE" (23 FEBRUARY 2005)

If you are in a relationship and you want your husband to take you in hand, there is a lot to consider. Taken In Hand means very differ-

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ent things to different people. You need to get sorted out with your husband exactly how much control you are both comfortable with for a start. Some women like having their husbands in charge of the finances, for instance; others might find this tiresome, or might have a husband who, like mine, is appalled at the very idea. Some women like to be very closely controlled, but I would find it very irksome if I thought my husband was watching my every move. You need to decide how much control you want, and how much your husband is prepared to use.

Then there is the question of whether your Taken In Hand relationship will include any "discipline". This is another thing you need to get sorted out. There are those who seem to seriously believe in "non-erotic punishment" (this is a DD idea, not Taken In Hand, as you can see if you read this article).^{*} I find the idea of non-erotic beatings deeply repellent, but nevertheless get a kick out of the idea that I am "really" being punished when my husband spansks me, even though both of us know that the ultimate effect is always erotic, as the boss says. There are other Taken In Hand people who do not want any kind of disciplinary aspect to their relationship. It will not do you any good unless it's something you really want.

Some women apparently like the idea of doing whatever your husband tells you even if you find it

silly or humiliating. I don't feel that way about it myself, and if my husband were always telling me to do things I disliked I don't think it would make for a very happy relationship. I like to feel that he cares about my happiness as well as his own, and that he isn't using our Taken In Hand relationship to just get his own way all the time. That would be an abusive relationship, not a Taken In Hand one.

If you are considering having a Taken In Hand relationship, I wish you luck in sorting out what you want.⁵⁰

"GREETINGS FROM A SPANISH TAKEN IN HAND COUPLE" (3 MARCH 2005)

I have been with my partner for two years, and for the last nine months we have been living together. We used to describe our relationship as BDSM 24/7 but we realised that that label is not accurate. And when we told people that we have a 24/7 BDSM relationship, they took that to mean a slave under the orders of her master 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and that isn't quite how we see it. We used to consider our relationship a D/s one, but since we have begun to live together we have discovered that it is difficult to think of our relationship as being simply D/s. We found that we wanted to apply to masculine dominance and feminine submission not only in special moments, games or sessions, but in all the daily things that we do, in the simplest everyday tasks.

^{*} "Why you should not withhold a spanking!" 29 November 2003.

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In addition, I do not want a submissive woman, less in her faculties, incapable of making decisions, with a personality constantly needing the approval of her companion. Neither do I want a woman who lives exclusively to serve to me. That is not the type of woman that I hope for in my companion.

On the contrary, I love a total woman of faculties, of capacities, motivated permanently towards the future projects that jointly we decide. I love a woman who is a full part of those projects by which we have been united and we decided to live together. I love a woman who so considers my tastes, and my desires, that she completes me in those things in which I have deficiencies. Finally, I want a woman who is perfectly responsible and takes the initiative in some from the labor areas that we share and in certain familiar areas like the administration for the home.

Perhaps, therefore, you can understand why the opinions and theory of Taken In Hand are of such interest to me despite the fact that my language is not English but Spanish, and the site is in English. We have discovered that our relationship, for the reasons I have given above, is not BDSM, and as a result, we also have the problem to find people in Spain with whom to share our way of life.

Taken In Hand affects all the facets of the life of each individual. This it is our point of view. And within the facets of the life of the people it also affects relationships with other friends, etc... It is necessary therefore—and this is also the opinion of

both of us—to share the restlessness and experiences with other people and couples who understand or are in a Taken In Hand relationship.

I think that it is necessary to find people with whom to share these ideas, in order to avoid the Taken In Hand relationship being extinguished by the things that to each one happen to us daily: familiar and labor stress, fatigue, obligations... The reality of life imposes pressure on our relationship to meet the conventional norms. As one responsible for this relationship I need the support others who can help me in the reminder of the norms of our form of life, that is to say, the reminder to me of my responsibility for my partner (mood, care, protection, love) and the one of her to me (obedience, recognition of my authority, acceptance of my discipline, recognition of my care, protection and love). Taken In Hand, from my point of view, needs to be subtly remembered every day. Between man and woman there is an interchange of tacit signals that remind each of their respective positions and responsibilities to the relationship. I hope this explain how alive and wonderful our relationship feels.⁵¹

“LESSONS FROM A TAKEN IN HAND GIRL” (3 MARCH 2005)

Quite a while back I was involved in a dating relationship that definitely had Taken In Hand characteristics although I didn't know what that was at the time. This relationship with K gave me insights into the nature of a woman who reveled in

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being taken in hand. One such insight revealed was that attitude not action belies a Taken In Hand girl's tendencies. Many a girl has enjoyed a playful spanking. Many a girl has enjoyed being sexually submissive. They enjoy the game but don't surrender to it. A Taken In Hand girl, on the other hand, revels in the feeling of being possessed that these acts can give her. I came to realize this with K by her reaction to an adventure I took her on.

I had returned to my hometown for a visit and one evening was taking K out for dinner. On a lark, I got the idea to buy her lingerie. I guess I should clarify—I got the idea to take her to buy lingerie. On retrospect I guess I didn't really consider how embarrassing this could be for her or I might have hesitated. I've known few women I would take to buy lingerie but with K I had no doubts. I was right that she wouldn't balk but was unprepared for her reaction.

I picked K up for dinner. On the way, we stopped by the mall. She rightfully questioned where we were going as we normally didn't go to the restaurants in the mall. I answered that I needed to pick something up. I guided her along around the teenagers and families crowding the mall. When I turned to go into Victoria's Secret, she halted momentarily but followed my lead when I told her I wanted to buy something for her. I'm sure there was some embarrassment as she realized everyone in the store would know what was happening. I had a small panic when I realized that you can't buy trashy looking g-string/stocking outfits at Victoria's Secret, but also

when realized that I didn't know her size. Being a gentleman, I certainly couldn't ask her. Instead I directed her to find something she liked. She attempted to gauge my desires with a few outfits but I was noncommittal as what I had wanted wasn't there. She eventually settled on a silky camisole with tap pants. I found this disappointing as I was set on something far more revealing. I told her to put it back and we'd try another place. She was disappointed but didn't complain. She just put the outfit back in its proper place and fell in at my side.

With my hand in the small of her back, I guided her out of the store and down the mall to Frederick's of Hollywood. Now, they have g-string/stocking outfits. We looked at a few styles before settling on a sheer white outfit. She selected her size in that style. I'll have to say she was a brave trooper. I don't think she was a big fan of the outfit but she accompanied me to the counter to make the purchase. Nary a complaint was heard. Thinking back I must have sensed her disappointment because then I was struck by a brilliant idea.

Back down the mall with bag in hand, we retraced our steps. The surprise was evident when we returned to Victoria's Secret. In the center of the store, I quietly ordered her to go get the outfit she'd selected. Upon her return I handed her a few bills with the direction to "buy it." I waited a few paces back as she paid the clerk and returned packages in hand. There was a bit more excitement in the air as we headed off to dinner. She insisted on carry-

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ing her package or should I say prize. Her mood had taken a decided turn.

We returned to her apartment after dinner. She established me on the couch bringing me a glass of wine. I noticed she only brought wine for me. She hovered, standing to my side for a short while before I suggested she model the lingerie. "Which?" she asked. "The Frederick's," I instructed. Modestly, she closed the bedroom door (it was a small apartment) before reappearing. She was very alluring although awkward in her sheer white Penthouse fantasy outfit. I should say that normally by this point of the date, she was nude, so the awkwardness wasn't due to revealing more than usual. She modeled for me then sat on the edge of the couch awaiting my direction. I'm not sure who was more surprised by my direction.

"Let's see the other outfit." I swear I think she skipped to the bedroom. This time when the door opened a very different woman strode purposefully to the couch. The g-string outfit had revealed her body, the camisole/tap pants revealed her attitude. K displayed the outfit in full feature. She had no hesitation and clearly demonstrated just how sexy she felt in the outfit. She settled at my feet; her chin upon my thigh; gazing up at me as I stroked her hair. Unexpectedly, she asked if she could have some wine. I say unexpectedly because never in our relationship had I controlled her eating or drinking although our play was dominant/submissive. However, at this moment I could tell she

would only drink if I permitted it. I watched her journey to and from the kitchen noting how the tap pants swayed with each step and how the camisole floated around her torso. Upon her return, she took a long sip of the wine while watching me with appreciative eyes. She placed the glass on the end table and waited for me to provide her with direction. I brought her to stand between my legs as my hands roamed over and beneath the outfit. The evening progressed as usual except that her submissiveness was much more intense than usual. I realize now that on that evening she truly gave herself to me.

I learned a few of insights from this adventure. First, never is a woman more sexy than when she is comfortable in her outfit—or skin, for that matter. K looked lovely in the g-string outfit but she looked indescribable in the tap pants. The material revealed less of her body but her attitude revealed more of her soul.

To truly enjoy a Taken In Hand woman, have her dress in a manner that feels sexy to her rather than dressing her according to your own preconceived idea.

Second, take care to show a Taken In Hand woman that you are attentive to her unspoken desires and she'll overwhelm you with her appreciation of you. I know my evening with K would have been fulfilling regardless but by fulfilling her desire for the camisole outfit, I inadvertently tapped into a need to be truly seen that had been neglected.

Third, a Taken In Hand woman likes to play but she yearns to feel

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possessed. I'd learned that K liked it when I talked of how women should serve men and I often did to excite her. Spanking and submissiveness was a big part of our relationship but nothing ever struck as strong a cord in her as walking her into a store to buy lingerie to fulfill my desire to see her in it. By "possessed"?, I don't mean owned but rather claimed. I claimed her as mine to enjoy and she chose to recognize my claim, letting me take possession.

Finally, be flexible. Learn to listen to her attitude and adapt if possible. She wants to please you and will acquiesce to your demands but if you take her desires into consideration, she will feel cherished. Cherished, she will not merely acquiesce to your demands, she will strive to meet your desires. Don't try to fit her into your fantasies, let your fantasies set the stage for her improvisation.⁵²

"FULL CIRCLE" (3 MARCH 2005)

I'm seriously considering a Taken In Hand relationship. My attitude toward men has come full circle and I think I'm ready to surrender to my husband's authority...I have a lot of questions at the end of this post!

In my early teens, I was considered, by my perfect-looking family, to be moody and difficult. I was an angry person and got into drugs and alcohol in my early teens. I also quickly figured out quite early how to work the boys to get my needs for attention and chemicals met. My promiscuity and drug addiction brought me to my knees in 1989 at just 22 years of age. At that point in

my life, I had no remaining dignity or self-respect. I began my journey into recovery then. While my body got clean from chemicals, I continued, for several months, to degrade myself by sleeping around. I was emotionally and spiritually empty.

As I became more lucid, did more reading and surrounded myself with a healthier, more mature crowd, I discovered feminism. I subscribed to Ms. Magazine and contributed to the N.O.W. I was angry at myself for allowing men to use me for all those years and I was angry at myself for allowing it to happen. I was angry at every man for every minor indiscretion they may have committed. If a guy held the door for me, I would seethe, not knowing the first thing about the difference between someone being nice and someone hitting on me!

Two or three years later, I slowly swung back to the center. I had developed into a confident, self-respecting, intelligent woman who knew exactly what she wanted and would not back down from anything. At the same time, I began to appreciate the differences that men brought to a relationship and recognize that, while it infuriated me at times, I was certainly drawn to masculine (usually emotionally reserved) men. I would no longer be caught making derogatory remarks about men in general and no longer took off color remarks from men personally.

I was just over three years clean when I got married. My husband and I had two children right in a row and we fought a lot. His energy level is much lower than mine and

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I've always felt so frustrated about this, calling him lazy. He is also quite reticent, which I have interpreted as insensitive and passive-aggressive. Having had an extremely independent, intelligent and overbearing mother, he learned early that being non-responsive was a far better weapon than speaking up. He would torture me with indifference while I verbally abused him with insults and sarcasm. He has a tendency to avoid friction at any cost, so he often lets me have the last word and/or have my way. He always says that I am never satisfied and I always thought that if he were just a bit more thoughtful, he would see how satisfied I would be. We came close to divorce twice. We've been together for thirteen years. He is gentle and very respectful of my privacy and my need for social interaction.

Recently, I have started reading articles at takeninhand.com and have read *The Surrendered Wife* by Laura Doyle. At any other point in my history, the information contained would have brought up rage in me and definitely turned me off. I would submit to no other human! I first began to read about Taken in Hand relationships because I've always wanted to be dominated sexually and the very idea of being spanked is extremely erotic to me. What happened to me when I started to really read the posts and Laura Doyle's book is that I found some very rational points within. I have surrendered to drugs, to alcohol, and to nicotine only to have my life improve tenfold. Why not my husband?

I began to be more respectful to my husband. For the past ten days, I've kept a journal of my progress. I've refrained from controlling him, took care not to use sarcasm or interfere with his parenting of our children. I've said "yes" to sex. When I have slipped up and been rude, controlling or complaining, I have promptly apologized for being disrespectful. I've also kept track of my thoughts and of my shortcomings in my journal. It has helped me to get clarity and avoid the same mistake next time. Not only does it turn me on to be somewhat subservient to him, it makes sense in that it eliminates all of our arguments. My temper will flare, but if I can let it pass, it really seems to have no residual effects. I was worried that resentment might build, but it doesn't. It always felt so wrong to be so verbally abusive anyway, I just didn't think I could control my resentment. Surrender. It just makes sense—and so far it's working.

I've decided that thirteen years of trying to control his behavior has not been effective and since I am 100% his wife today, I will choose to be 100% in this marriage. This means that until the day that I should decide not to be in this marriage, I will surrender to him 100%. I agree with the writer who said that "It takes a strong woman to be submissive." If I were not comfortable with and sure of who I am and what I think, then being dominated would both crush my spirit and make it difficult for others to respect me. I'm sure that my husband would not respect me or enjoy my company if I agreed with him and fussed over him all the

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time. He is attracted to my out-going personality, my intelligence and my confidence...or so he's said. He wants me to have my own personality. Sometimes that's a tough call — when am I submitting to his authority and can I do it completely without losing myself? At any rate, it seems like a full circle because I gave up my identity for the attention of men 15 years ago, I was a groveling nobody with no personality of her own. Later I couldn't even like men and thought that I was superior, then I thought we were equals but my husband somewhat intolerable, and today, I'm healthy and mature enough to be submissive and hold on to myself...I hope!

I'd really like to read posts from people who have not yet told their partners that they want a taken in hand relationship yet or from people who have only done so recently. Has anyone's partner balked? Has anyone's partner refused to participate? Have they thought that you were selling out? Were they happy to finally hear it? Was anyone sure that their partner would not be game and then been wrong? How about sure their partner would like the idea and then been wrong? Is anyone still afraid to speak up? Did anyone wait several months, trying to submit consistently, before asking to be taken in hand? Has anyone had second thoughts about having a taken in hand relationship? I've been reading many articles on takeninhand.com, but really not read much about this early part of the process.

Thanks for everyone's posts. It's helpful stuff on my road to surrender.⁵³

"MY INTELLECTUAL EQUAL WANTED ME TO TAKE CONTROL" (6 MARCH 2005)

I met the one I will call "N" about 1997. I knew she was at least my equal in so many things. When we competed with board games and computer games, she had to win! She always knew more about computers and she was good with people. I was very happy with the competitive nature of her personality.

But she also wanted something more... Something a sexual partner hadn't been able to satisfy. She wanted a man in her life to "take" control of her sexual fantasies. At first I was unsure of how safe a man can be if he succumbs to his partner's fantasies, especially those of total sexual dominance.

I am a man of peace and nature.. I write poetry and play guitar. Still, N asked me to help her live out those feelings she had suppressed for all her years.. I even had her put in writing that it was consensual..

She opened up a part of me that I never knew was there.. I took total control of our physical relationship. She called it "the Keith sex rules". I think it was just as much, if not more the N rules.

I remember many mornings waking up with her next to me, she still wearing the rags of what used to be her clothes, being told what a perfect lover I was. I never felt more alive and happy, knowing I was being for someone what they needed to feel alive and in love.

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I know now that a man can be the most man he can be... and never hurt or endanger another. I know now how strong love can be between two, how much two can want and need each other. I applaud this website and the courage those who need post their feelings, out where anyone can question them.

Alas, my partner passed away suddenly from a heart defect 4 years ago. She is with me every day, and I hope one day to have another partner with those feelings, love unabated and partnership eternal.

I wish all who seek these fellyings to find all they need. I know now that I want to be for another what I was for one before. It is hard to see these attributes in women I meet. This website is the only one I have ever seen that addresses these wants. I hope just one pair of lovers find what I did.⁵⁴

"AN ALPHA FEMALE BARES HER THROAT ONLY TO HER MATE" (7 MARCH 2005)

My introduction to the Taken In Hand site was an essay on submission, which made me think about my relationship with my husband of seven years. I'm neither controlled nor submissive—we have what our relationship guru, Dr. Patricia Allen, calls a *covenant relationship*: which is based on equity; on chosen and complementary roles. Dr. Pat defines a covenant relationship as one in which the roles are designated: that is, each of us naturally has the full range of male and females energies, but we *choose* to remain anchored in our preferred energy.

Pat also teaches:

- *convenient relationship*: where the partners are both masculine energy and feminine energy, both get respected and cherished; although if their timing is off, it can result in clashes or hurt feelings and anger; and
- *co-dependent relationships*: where one person wants to be both respected and cherished, and the other person gets neither—Peter Pan and Wendy are the exemplars—she gives and (over-)gives hoping to get back from him but he never gives back! (Very occasionally, a co-dependent relationship between two strong narcissists works because each is able to hold their boundaries against the other. Lots of fireworks usually, though.)

I prefer to be the feminine-energy partner in a covenant relationship. That means that I am gratefully receptive to Mike; I am available to receive whatever and whenever he wishes to give, whether positive or negative (I am a woman with a career, not a career woman: he comes first!); and respectful of him. It also means I give up my natural right to present my wants, opinions, and directions freely to him. If I wish to offer a suggestion or opinion to him, I get his permission first—that is, I don't ambush him by suddenly turning into a Yang masculine-energy competitor for leadership. It also means that unless he suggests something that's illegal, immoral, or unethical, I follow his lead—no whining about what restaurant I want to

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go to, or what color I want to paint the living room.

I'm a very strong woman, and I need a very strong man if I am to respect him. I had wistfully decided there was no man so strong, and thus I was doomed to never marry. Then Mike showed up: he *is* that strong—I have no fear of ever being able to out-think or use force with him—and so I am entirely comfortable subordinating myself to him, as only an alpha female wolf can! The alpha female knows herself to be naturally superior in rank over all the other pack members—but defers to her alpha male.

Sadly, too many of the ladies on my Pat Allen-related lists can't hear that yet; they're still mired in the egalitarian fantasy and believe they can have a man who will provide for, protect, and cherish them but *also* see them as equals! I hope to awaken them to the fact that men really are different. If you want an alpha male/Yang mate, you're *not* going to get a sweetness-and-light wimp; you're gonna get a guy who likes weapons and women! A man who is intent on his status and his ranking against other men—because women's rankings of him don't count! Real uncomfortable stuff, that, for most “modern” women.

Mike is the Yang, masculine-energy partner in our marriage: he provides for me, he protects me, and he cherishes my feelings above his. That means he ensures I feel comfortable and secure. It also means that he must suck up his own negative feelings or anger, and not dump them on me without first getting my

agreement to hear him. That way I am not ambushed into trying to take care of or sooth or “manage” his feelings unexpectedly. It also means he doesn't get to blow off steam from work at me! I am protected not merely from the world, but from his frustration. If I am doing something that bothers him (something he *feels* bad about), he makes an appointment with me, so I am prepared and receptive to hear his feelings, but otherwise he manages his own feelings, and takes care of mine!

I am the yin, feminine-energy partner, the receptive and cherished follower. That only applies in our relationship, between us—not at work, or in a store, or with other men and women where I am my usual Yang self! I am willing to control my Yang masculine-energy self (with Mike) and I work to remain anchored in my feminine-energy self, because that complementarity allows for Mike and me to have the best, most intimate, most balanced, and happy marriage. (Remember: all people have both kinds of energy.) I'm not submissive (in the textbook sense), and yet I recognize and respect him as the alpha male; the leader of our “pack”—I would (and will) follow him anywhere he leads! And I am a pretty damned good leader myself!! But I *choose* to be his loyal and loving subordinate—*not* his slave or servant or toy! He has as much care and responsibility to me as I do to him!

the boss wrote:

In some Taken In Hand couples, the woman sees herself as a shrew being tamed; some women want to

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be brought to submission; some think in terms of having their resistance broken or of being conquered.

I got a chuckle out of this: we joke about Mike “taming his feral female”: because I was a serious (angry) feminist, a really masculine Yang woman when we met—in self-defense of the wounded little girl that he recognized and came to protect. But he and I do not find comfortable (for us—whatever floats your boat, eh?) the concept of “breaking” a woman; because who wants a broken woman? What does it say about a man (and his perception of manhood and of himself as a man) that he wants to “break” her, instead of choosing to cherish, protect, and guide her?! I have not been “broken”—I have been shown that while I may be head and shoulders above most other people, to Mike I am a beloved subordinate.

Most women want a man who is stronger, and can't be pushed or led around. None of us wants a wimp! (Or a husband-son!!) Rather than love and domination, I'm confused by this notion of domestic discipline / bondage / S&M, which seems to turn into further breaking someone already broken. Only someone who is already broken would consider being hit some version of love. I'm all for domination: the master is a master because he is *better* (bigger, stronger, smarter, more willing to be violent—but with his peers and competitors, *not* with his lover!—he's protective of her against all others!) Just because a man can beat up his woman does not make him worthy of her respect

or make her willing to follow his lead.

It's not being submissive when you defer to your chosen alpha male. And he's not being an authoritarian dictator when he sets the plans and leads you—he's taking appropriate care of his woman. Pat Allen makes the balance and rewards of complementarity clear: when a woman is cherished, she feels respected. When a man is respected, he feels cherished!

Personally, I don't understand the need for physical discipline. If it is a sexual pleasure for you, have at it! However, if it is necessary in order that the woman “stays within his directions,” well, I'm not sure what that says about her willingness to make and keep her commitments to him. An alpha female wolf does not need the male to discipline her; she is entirely aware of her responsibilities as his second; she is subordinate to him because she *chooses* to be so, not because he can force her to be so. (She's worthy of his leadership!)

Of course, this may be the difference between an alpha wolf woman and a more naturally submissive or feminine woman. I am not naturally submissive—I am naturally rather aggressive and entirely elitist. I had given up on ever finding a man I was willing to marry, because I was not willing to subordinate myself to any man I had met until Mike showed up. But now I am, wholeheartedly and completely: Mike's Girl.⁵⁵

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"FINDING MY WAY HOME" (9 MARCH 2005)

I am a 50 year old woman who lost herself in the relationship maze. Our marriage of 14 years ended in divorce ten years ago. Unfortunately the power struggle continues: it seems to have taken on a life of its own. Our children, now young adults, are like the rope in the middle of a tug-of-war.

I always wanted a Taken In Hand relationship: it was the subconscious template etched in my brain. It was what I expected without discussion, exploration or articulation—a given. Trust, loyalty and the faith that love will prevail is pretty much where I started, the foundation. A man that would be a good husband and father.

I would like to believe that I am always respectful, that I treat everyone with dignity; however, experience seems to tell a different story. Our relationship derailed for many reasons, but the one that sits at the very top of the list is respect. I did not understand, respect or listen to my own body, didn't really know much about physical chemistry or attraction.

Over time my husband became Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde; the nice guy I thought I had married surfaced at the office or out in the front street talking to neighbors, but at home he was a bear. Miserable, critical, hostile, angry. Managing his stress became the focus of my life, something I felt was necessary to protect the health and well being of our children.

In hindsight, if I truly respected him or myself, I wouldn't have gone more than one or two steps down that path, but I did. Passively accepting outrageous behavior, I maintained a physical presence but checked out emotionally. Eventually, when his words could no longer penetrate the shell of my cocoon, he attacked physically with his fists. Trust was broken.

It has taken me a long time to find my way home. I think I am on the right path but trust remains an issue. Where I once jumped in head first without hesitation, fearless, now I hesitate. Home is trusting myself.⁵⁶

"ACTS OF LOVE" (11 MARCH 2005)

I love to please those who are dear to me. I like to help them get what they want and not get what they don't want. I like to make them feel nice, whether by a warm smile, a few words, a small act of kindness or something more. Unless I am having a very bad day, I gladly do whatever my loved ones ask of me, and a lot more besides. (Actually, my loved ones rarely ask me to do anything for them, and often do things for me to make *me* feel nice! I think that that is often how things are when individuals are very dear to each other. We want to do things for one another.)

I particularly enjoy fulfilling loved ones' "impossible dreams", whether it be getting a dear friend's favourite author to come to dinner, or making it possible for a young person to meet and spend time with the guitarist of his favourite supergroup.

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But I also find it pleasurable to do something as simple as offering to switch on a light as I pass a room where a loved one is reading and either has not noticed that it has grown dark or has not wanted to leave his or her comfortable chair to turn the light on.

With the possible exception of my impossible wish granting activities which are for me inherently interesting problem-solving exercises as much as anything else, I think that any able-bodied person in a good relationship of any kind engages in these kinds of service without even thinking of it as serving.

This is love-based service, and it is always wholehearted, never half-hearted. It cannot be extracted from the unwilling. You cannot get it by demanding it, or through manipulation, coercion or threats. It is intrinsically motivated, not extrinsically motivated—a gift freely given, not sought.

Love-based service is nothing to do with submission, submitting or being submissive. The strongest leader and the most dominant alpha person are as likely to render love-based service as anyone else. Nor does it have anything to do with gender. It is simply what people do for once another when they actively and deeply care about one another.

Notes

Other kinds of service include service for money (as in earning a living), self-sacrificial service (service given grudgingly or half-heartedly, out of a sense of duty), fear-based service (service extracted from the unwilling, coercively, by force or threat of force), and service rendered

by those who derive erotic gratification from serving and service-orientated submission. I will say more about this in a future article.⁵⁷

"THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES, BY GARY CHAPMAN: BOOK REVIEW" (13 MARCH 2005)

In *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*, Gary Chapman talks about how we show our love to others and how it affects our relationships, especially our marriages.

Many people's main love language is "acts of service". These people show their love by doing kind and helpful things for those we love. My husband is this kind of person. This weekend he detailed my car for me. He will do all kinds of jobs like this for me to show me that he loves me. Usually I don't even have to ask. He just notices what I need and does it.

My main love language on the other hand is quality time. So I have to work very hard to remember to do special acts of service for him. It doesn't come naturally to me because I am not naturally task oriented. I have to constantly remind myself to try to make him food that he likes or do housework that will please him. This really shows him love.

My husband is very task oriented and always working around the house on his days off. One day when he was a little under the weather he lay on the bed and we watched TV together all day and chatted. To me it was delightful to have his total attention for the whole day! I wasn't

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happy he wasn't feeling well of course but it was so nice that he didn't have to work on tasks all day. For me having his relaxed attention for the day was much nicer than having him do all sorts of thoughtful tasks around the house.

We both have to work constantly to try to speak the other person's "language" and not just our own. If we only speak our own language we may think we are showing love but the other person just can't hear it. Another thing we work hard on is praising each other for trying to please us. I work very hard to remember to thank my husband for all the jobs he is doing around the house. He really appreciates being thanked for all the hard work he puts in around here. And I really do appreciate the work too. When I finally realized he is doing all these jobs to show his love for his family I was truly thankful and it was easy to tell him so.⁵⁸

"DIFFERENT STROKES FOR DIFFERENT FOLKS" (15 MARCH 2005)

Being protected and cared for is something most Taken In Hand women want, but many do not want their relationship to involve "correction", "discipline", etc. That is an optional extra.

I have toyed with the idea of "serious" discipline since discovering the world of DD and Taken In Hand, but have come to the conclusion that it isn't for me. I have always found being spanked erotic, and that is how it remains for me.

If I didn't want to exercise, there would be no way that my husband could beat me into doing it (he would be the last man in the world to do this anyway, since exercise is anathema to him). I try to do things that I know will please him, and not to do things that I know annoy him, but that's because I want to please him, not because I'm afraid of being beaten if I don't.

Some women like being pinned down on a bed, etc. Others, like me, would find this rather alarming. I find my husband's ability to exercise control over me mentally more interesting than physical control, which is no big deal. He's bigger and stronger than me; so are most men—so what? It's the fact that he can flick that switch within me and make me feel submissive with just a word or a look that I find exciting.

Today's society is more flexible than it ever was in the past, and people have greater freedom to choose different kinds of relationships than they ever did. No one kind of relationship suits everyone, and the male head of the household kind is just one kind.

Not all women will want the same thing, not because they're afraid of their feelings or in denial or anything, but just because it simply doesn't suit them.⁵⁹

"ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION? ARE YOU REALLY CONNECTING?" (16 MARCH 2005)

Our Taken In Hand relationship is about connection. My mate pays attention. He is interested in all as-

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pects of my life. The arousal that results from a spanking isn't due to the spanking, but due to his willingness to lead, even when it's difficult or I am difficult. Nothing is too trivial for me to talk about, to need, or to trivial for him to notice.

Being connected means he would never require me to do something he knows I would absolutely detest. Being in the leadership role means he would find a different way to get the same desired results. He may want me to exercise but knows how much I hate exercising. He could require me to exercise anyway, and when I didn't comply, spank me. I would feel oppressed should that happen. I would feel my feelings didn't matter or weren't important. Or, he could decide that we take a walk together every night. I get the exercise I need, but I get it in a way that is enjoyable.

Our relationship isn't just about him leading and me submitting. It's about the connection between us that enables him to effectively lead and me to submit. It's about him having intimate knowledge of my emotions, my thought process, my needs (the ones I can easily verbalize and the ones I can't but need to). It's about him seeing what I need and finding a way for that need to be filled in a positive way. I am always amazed at how quickly he senses things, hears things in my voice that I thought I was hiding. He picks up on the slightest sound of stress no matter how hard I try not to sound stressed.

He bears my pissy moments very well, rather indulgently really, until I cross the line of disrespect or in-

consideration. That will get me over his knee for a "serious" spanking. The arousal aspect of it is not the spanking per se, but that he cares enough about our connection to spank me.

I have his complete attention, total interest, his loyalty, his love. He is devoted not only to me, but to our connection, our relationship. I try to do things that please my mate. I don't do this to keep from getting a spanking though. I do it because I am very much in love with him.⁶⁰

"TAKING IT STEP-BY-STEP MAKING PIECEMEAL CHANGES" (21 MARCH 2005)

I'm just starting in this new kind of relationship. My husband knows about my ideas and he's very happy about them.

And this is the way it has worked for us so far:

First I promised him to get rid of some bad habits he had sometimes really suffered from. For example: He going to bed (at about midnight) and asking me if I'd join and telling me that he'd be happy if I would. My answer: Yes, of course, dear. I'll be there in a minute. Just finishing this mail/ this magazine / this article / this chapter / this cup of tea (or whatever).

Well, I'm quite ashamed to admit that I didn't come in a minute – most times I didn't come in an hour. No, I wrote and wrote and read and read and simply forgot about the time passing ... My husband often complained and told me that he always hoped that I'd stick to my answer

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and always was deeply disappointed when I didn't. (And that was nearly every time he asked.) And I always told him that, of course, my behaviour wasn't meant to hurt him, that it was just a bad habit.

Finally I recognized his frustration about my unreliable behaviour and I decided to change things. So this was the main thing I promised to him in a letter. I also wrote that maybe I needed his help every now and then and that he could remind me of my promise and even demand that I should keep it.

Well, he didn't quite believe me at first. He thought I had written my letter in a strange mood and that I would never stick to my promises and resolutions. And besides, he wasn't sure if he liked the role of a "reminder" and of a man, who demands something of his wife. I was a bit disappointed of his disapproval, but I tried my best to show him how serious my resolution was during the next days. This convinced him (and me, too!) quickly that we were on a good path for a deeper relationship and that I really appreciated his help when coming to my home office telling me (with a nice smile, but still serious): "Darling, time to switch off the computer now." (And by the way he has not needed to utter this request more than two or three times during the past 10 weeks.)

Then I dared telling him about my spanking fantasies which I've had for many years. I was afraid he would think I was crazy, mad, perverse... and maybe that he would reject me. But when I'd been courageous enough to talk about my de-

sires and my fears, he just confirmed that he loved me so much! This made me feel very happy, although he also explained that the idea of spanking was absolutely unfamiliar to him, that thinking of it didn't arouse him at all and that he didn't know whether he was able to do it. But at least he wanted to try! And I felt so released, as we had some good, honest and deep conversations on this topic.

He tried spanking very cautiously at first, but nowadays he also likes it and it belongs quite naturally in our sexual life. We both noticed that spanking really does a lot to turn me on and so we both enjoy it.

Next step was to confess to him that I'd like to submit sexually to him. He was very, very surprised (knowing me as an ardent feminist who was convinced that doing something for a man could harm her independence and maybe even her personality! Yes, I really had these strange convictions and feelings!). So in the beginning he couldn't quite believe what I had said, but the idea surely wasn't unpleasant to him. ;-) It didn't take long until he enjoyed this new ingredient in our relationship wholeheartedly.

Nearly every morning he asks: "Is this a dream or is it true?" He's so happy and so am I. In former times I always thought being sexually available for him would be very, very unpleasant or even disgusting for me and not worth trying. But not at all: promising him that he can take me sexually whenever he feels like it, even in the morning hours when I'm usually very sleepy, arouses and excites me so much that

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I feel like it almost always he shows his desire. And if my lust is not there from the very beginning, because I'm simply too sleepy first, then it grows fast by doing...

And then I stumbled across the Taken in Hand website, got excited by reading the articles and recognized that I really approved of submitting in daily life, too. Unfortunately I didn't manage to explain this idea to my husband in a way he could understand it right away. This led to a severe misunderstanding and even to a quarrel. But we talked once more the next day and I tried to clarify things (which wasn't easy).

He told me that he had always seen me as a very dominant person, so he couldn't quite imagine what my ideas were about. It took some days and some talks, until he realized that I was also serious about my desire to submit to him in daily life (not only in sexual matters) and until he was fond of being head of the household. I had been afraid that he would dislike being head of the household as he is in charge of a team and responsible for many important decisions in his job. So I assumed he wouldn't like to make the decisions at home... But no—he just had to get accustomed to this new path.

Maybe I should add that, of course, I did not only make promises and did not only talk to him—but I've always tried to live up to my new convictions and resolutions. I still do, of course. And we still talk... there are still many, many questions for both of us, such as: How far do we want to go? Will there also be discipline? Which decisions in daily

life will I make by myself and which will be made by my husband? In which cases do I need a permission from his side? In which cases is being asked for permission just unpleasant for him?

But we decided to try a Taken In Hand relationship and we both enjoy our first steps. Our youngest son (16 yrs old) just told us: "You've been married for 20 years now, but you know, you behave as if you've just fallen in love for each other!"

My husband takes so much care in order to see me happy (for instance with his final decisions to spend the weekend) and I take care that he's happy.

I'm not quite sure why we didn't have this kind of care for each other's wellbeing when we lived an "equal" relationship. But it's our experience now that Taken In Hand just feels right for us.⁶¹

"HOW WE STOPPED FIGHTING AND BECAME HAPPIER TOGETHER" (22 MARCH 2005)

When I first found this site I thought it must be a joke. I was very disconcerted, attracted and repelled by what I read. Gradually I came to admit that the feeling of attraction was stronger than the feeling of repulsion. But I thought that wanting to regard my husband as a serious authority figure was terribly silly, and frankly I didn't think he had sufficient self-control to do it anyway.

Then, I think it was only about a week after I discovered this site, we had one of our massive rows (our

last one to date) and it brought on a sort of nervous crisis. I found myself actually talking *seriously* to my husband (not something we go in for much normally).

I told him how much it upset me when he lost his temper and yelled at me, I told him that if he'd try harder not to lose his temper, I'd try much harder not to do the things that caused him to lose it. I told him I was serious about wanting to please him, and that it worked better for me if it was kept on a personal level (i.e. I'm much happier doing things because he wants me to do them rather than being told, as he often did in the past, that I should do such-and-such because it's what other women do, that just made me loathe all the other women). And, much to my surprise it worked, and it worked the way others had described it working on this site.

We don't have rows any more, he's happier because he feels I listen to him and pay attention to what he wants. I'm happier because he doesn't lose his temper with me any more. I have found that doing what he wants has made me happier as well as him. He has never tried to make a joke out of it by telling me to do things just for the sake of it, rather than because it's something he really wants done. He's more willing to make compromise decisions that keep both of us happy because he knows I'm more willing to do things that he wants.

It's made both of us happier, and that's what it's all about as far as I am concerned.⁶²

"IS HE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD?" (22 MARCH 2005)

What does being head of the household mean? Is the man only head of the household if every final decision is his? If so, then is my husband head of the household? I don't know.

Here's the thing. We are currently discussing the possibility of moving from our current residence to my husband's home town. He doesn't like living round here, he never has done. There would be many advantages. It's a much, much cheaper area than the one we live in at present. We would be at the seaside, which would mean we could go sailing whenever we liked, which would be wonderful, and the children love the idea of living by the sea.

I am, however, despite all the attractions, suffering a degree of panic at the thought of moving. I've lived here virtually all my life, I've never wanted to live anywhere else, and the thought of uprooting is scary. Then there's all the worry about finding a new school for the children, what if they don't like it etc., etc.

I want my husband to be happy, I really do, and I know that moving back to his home town, where his mother and most of his other relatives still live, would make him very happy. But *I know* that if I said to him "I can't stand the thought of moving, I've lived here all my life, I don't want to live anywhere else" we wouldn't move. He wouldn't be

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able to stand the thought of making me unhappy.

I'm not going to do that, because it isn't really true anyway, I don't think moving will make me unhappy, I'm just a bit frightened at the prospect.

Does the fact that my husband would put my happiness before his own mean he's not head of the household?

How unbending in your decisions do you have to be in order to be considered head of the household?⁶³

"ON BEING A MAN" (22 MARCH 2005)

Whether a man is a head of state or a husband, taking charge is predicated on doing what is best for everyone involved. Sometimes the strongest men are absolute pushovers on the simplest of things. They have a tender touch.

Yet, underneath, there is a core of resiliency that will not be moved. There are simply things that this person will not do. Likewise, there are things that he will not allow to be done.

As head of a household, a man does not always have to be right. He certainly does not have to be perfect. Nor does he always have to be superficially strong. What he must have is a capacity to look beyond himself.

That said, if he has dealt with a woman given to needling and pushing buttons, there comes a time when he may need to straighten a few things out. This may be as simple as jerking a knot in his wife's rear end or it may be as complex as

making significant changes in the family's lifestyle.⁶⁴

"IS IT TRUE THAT A MAN SHOULDN'T NEED TO GET PHYSICAL?" (23 MARCH 2005)

Some say that a man should not need to get physical to retain control. I have seen that attitude many times, even on this site. The idea is that it all takes place in the mind, so the man should not need to use any physical means of control. If he does so, the argument goes, there is something inherently weak in him, or something childish in the woman.

The physical part of the relationship with my husband takes place in many, many forms. We have spanking, sex—so many forms of physical contact, really. They all mesh together to form our physical relationship. We both think that our relationship is very healthy and we are quite happy with it.

To me, saying the man should not *need* to get physical to exert his control is like saying that he should not need to touch you to bring you to orgasm. I have heard that orgasms can take place all in the mind, but does that mean that to be a truly great lover you should bring your lover to orgasm each and every time using her mind only? I understand that the mind is important in orgasms; at least it is for me. Sex is not purely a physical act for me. A great deal takes place in my head. I know because if my head is in the wrong space, then orgasm will likely not occur.

It may be possible for my husband to bring me to orgasm without

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touching me. We have never tried this so I do not know. But I think he is a truly excellent lover because he knows my body so well. He knows how to take control of sex, he knows how to touch me, where, for how long. He has a tremendous amount of insight into my sexual nature. It is very exciting. I want him to touch me; I want to feel sex on more than a mental level. Neither of us are immature lovers because we choose to use physical contact in our love making. Yes he knows what to say too, he knows how to manipulate the situation so that my head is in the right headspace. It is the right combination of mental and physical that makes sex so truly wonderful for us. This explanation most people would quickly understand.

For us his control in our relationship is the exactly the same way. He needs to know the right mix of mental and physical experiences to make his control in our relationship a truly wonderful experience. I think it is just like in sex, some people like their toes touched, some hate it, some like their hair touched, some hate it, and the list is endless. Well when it comes to people who like Taken In Hand relationships there are many forms of physical and mental control that will work or not work for each couple. It is up to them to decide, very likely through trial and error, which forms work best for them. Because when you enjoy the control of a man, when he gets it right it can be as good as an orgasm. It can feel that good for us.

We would never use many of the things that others use. That does not make what we do any more or less

mature than what others do. The whole idea that this is childish does not fit us at all. It is all part of our adult sexual nature: that inherently makes it mature for us. When I am over his knee for something serious I do not think that he is treating me like a child. I think that he knows exactly what to do; so that we feel the control, he needs to make his control in our relationship the most it can be. And yes if he asked me to stand in a corner I would. I have never had fantasies about that, but if he decided that is what needed to be done to exert his control then I would do it. It would be sexy and adult then because it would be about our adult sexual relationship.

We very much enjoy my husband's control in our relationship. We have found that with him in the lead, our life in general is so much better. This is not because I am too immature to run the show, but because his actual physical control of the relationship touches us in so many ways on so many levels. I do not need to obey him to get through life in one piece. But I do like it when he insists that I do obey him and is willing to emphasise what he expects using physical control. This hands on approach works for us. I know it is not for everyone, but liking it in your life is not more or less mature. There are many ways for a man to take a woman in hand. It is a truly great leader who can learn and understand what his woman responds to the most. It is just the same with sex: a truly great lover knows what his woman responds to the most and is willing to do it.⁶⁵

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"ABUSIVE MEN: HEDDA NUSSBAUM'S LIST OF RED FLAGS" (25 MARCH 2005)

[This list of red flags seems to be in the public domain so I am posting it here. If it is not, my apologies, and please let me know. —Ed.]

1. He pushes too far, too fast, planning your future together right away.
2. He hates his mother and is nasty to her.
3. He wants your undivided attention.
4. He must always be in charge.
5. He always has to win.
6. He breaks promises all the time.
7. He can't take criticism and always justifies his actions.
8. He blames someone else for anything that goes wrong.
9. He's jealous of your close friends, family members, and all other men.
10. He always asks you where you went and whom you saw.
11. He has extreme highs and lows that are unpredictable.
12. He has a mean temper.
13. He often says you don't know what you're talking about.
14. He makes you feel like you're not good enough.
15. He withdraws his love or approval as punishment.
16. He pushes you to do things that make you feel uneasy, like taking the day off from work or even breaking the law.⁶⁶

"LEARNING TO BE MORE ASSERTIVE CAN TAKE TIME" (26 MARCH 2005)

My husband was very passive by nature for the many years. His father was very naturally a servant in eve-

ry aspect of his life. He not only served his family but also the community he lived in. So my husband's role model was always that of a very patient, serving father. His mother was the more selfish one and the bossier one. His father was not a pushover by any means but was not domineering at all. His natural way to handle most situations was to try to serve his wife and to care for her needs emotionally and physically. My husband modeled that. I tend to be a bit on the bossy side and have tended to wear the pants, not because I liked it but because my husband was so mellow. He always wanted to please me so he would often defer to my wishes.

Since our relationship has become a Taken In Hand one, we have both been much happier. He feels more in control of our home and I feel more at peace and more protected. This change has been a long time coming, though. I began to change about 8 years ago by gradually giving up control to him and he gradually took the authority. It was a little bit at a time so that over a year ago when he started using physical consequences to help me it felt very natural. I liked it a lot and he found he did too. But the change in our relationship started many years before he started taking me in hand physically and emotionally. Before that he would never have demanded my submission or obedience—I just gave it to him. But I gave it intermittently and inconsistently. I lacked respect for my husband. When he started to demand my respect it sky rocketed in my heart, and my love for him grew too.

Here is my advice for what it's worth. Read *The Surrendered Wife* and think through it. You may not agree with everything there, but it is a good starting place. You giving up the authority and surrendering to your husband will be the place to start. The more you surrender the more control he will take. It will begin to feel natural to him.

Secondly, I suggest if you enjoy the idea you begin using erotic spanking during sex. We did and we both loved it. Just feeling his dominance during sex brought a new spark to our sex life as well as life outside of the bedroom. It gave him a greater sense of dominance and it gave me a greater sense of submission. Gradually he started adding extra swats for real offenses or harder sessions for real offenses. If I had been bitchy on any given day I knew I would feel it during our nightly lovemaking. I would therefore be more careful about how I acted or what I said. It sort of slowly evolved into what it has become now.

He is now completely different from how he used to be a year ago and so am I. It is possible to see these changes occur but it does take time. If you are embarking on this course, try to enjoy every change you see in yourself as well as any you see in your husband.

All this being said I must add that things will probably be different for you and your husband because you are different from me and mine.

I hope this helps. I was sure my husband would never learn to "wear the pants". Well he does, and very nicely too!⁶⁷

"GIVEN A CHOICE BETWEEN TWO MEN ..." (27 MARCH 2005)

Why is it that when given a choice between two men, a woman will very often choose to be with the one who treats her worst? Why does a woman choose to live with a man who is thoroughly and obviously inappropriate for the life that the woman aspires to?

Not one of my female friends has ever alluded to a repressed desire to participate in a relationship with a man who would be rude, neglectful, unfaithful, dishonest, idle and destructive yet, on one occasion that I counted, fully nine of them were giving no small amount of their time and energy to the devoted care of males who offered so little prospect of ever being a dream come true that some of these women could have had more fun dating a child's plastic doll. Never once has any one of these nine intelligent, attractive, articulate and educated women confided that she feels her calling in life is to serve the unworthy and to dispense care and respect to those incapable of earning either. Perhaps I exaggerate a little—some of the men held well paid jobs, or had good dress sense, or were muscular, and some of them had that quality so favoured in the relationship wanted adverts, the "great sense of humour"; even if the burden of the joke often fell upon their loyal and attentive female partner. Nonetheless the discrepancy between what the women aspired to and what they settled for was sometimes of such a magnitude that even a card-carrying atheist might

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reasonably have demanded a miracle in order to have it resolved.

These were not, at least officially, stupid or ignorant women: all nine of them had been well educated and had the certificates to prove it. Nor were they hideously unattractive in their anatomical construction; it is true that not all of them would have popularly been described as stunning, pretty or cute, but they were all attractive in the popular meaning of the word and none of them would have been described as ugly or even as plain. So, there they were, nine fit, sexy, stylish, educated, intelligent and ambitious women all lending their loving energy to males who were their inferior in almost every way except physical size and strength.

Some people have attempted to explain such conundrums by arguing that some women choose a male inferior to themselves because they have some notion of improving him. Others have argued that the women are persuaded by the male's big talk and dominant physique to believe that he is a better person than he actually is. Others might argue that despite all of their positive attributes some women are simply insecure and choose to be with an inferior man because they do not believe themselves good enough for a better male and wish to reduce their perceived risk of rejection. True? False? I don't know and I readily concede that these are all valid possibilities or contributory factors. However here is another explanation that I personally find useful:

There is a popular form of community "wisdom" that is applied particularly to romantic or sexual relationships but also to other areas of life, and which encourages people to treat their emotions as their guide, or as signposts, and to believe that any action is validated by the emotions that gave rise to it. The eloquent maxims of this "wisdom" include such literary gems as "go with the flow", "just do it", "be true to yourself", "let your heart be your guide" and a raft of similarly acoustically pretty but intellectually vacuous expressions. Underlying these expressions or attitudes seems to be the notion that emotional feelings are undeniable, uncontrollable, unaccountable and that not to take action in accordance with such emotions or to resist those emotions is somehow dishonest. This in turn seems to imply an assumption that the emotions come first and that actions ought then to follow, rather like a railway locomotive pulls the carriages: "wherever my heart leads, there I shall go". Now whilst there may be some truth that certain emotions (infatuation perhaps, or parent-child affection?) do indeed burst out of nowhere I am inclined to wonder if these are the exception rather than the rule. To me the evidence seems to indicate that it is more usual for our emotions to follow our actions. If we continue with the railway train example then the popular wisdom would put the emotions as the locomotive and the carriages would represent the actions but I, by contrast, would like to argue that in life in general the actions represent the locomotive and the carriages represent the emotions. So what does this imply:

If, as I am proposing, a person's emotions will follow their actions then the feelings that P has for Q

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will depend principally on how P behaves towards Q. Consequently if P treats Q with loving respect and acts towards Q as if Q were a treasured companion then, in time, P will come to want Q to be a treasured companion and will feel real love for Q. Conversely if P neglects Q, or is consistently rude to Q then, in time, P will feel disdain or contempt for Q and will not want to be with Q. The important thing to note about this is that P's emotions regarding Q depend principally on what P does for Q, and *not* on what Q does for P.

If this model is applied to the relationships of the nine women mentioned at the beginning of the article then it is possible to propose an explanation of why they behaved the way they did.

For the sake of discussion let us take our hypothetical observation into a nightclub or party where woman W has just met male person M. At this moment their relationship is totally superficial, M smiles at W and W sizes-up M, she knows nothing about him but decides for whatever reason that he is worthy of a little attention. They chat and mingle, dance a little and exchange a few smiles and pheromones. Some sexual biology kicks-in and, at what is still a very superficial level, the attraction grows. Assuming that nothing too unpleasant happens to spoil the illusion of closeness they continue seeing one another and, throughout the process, they are both investing time and effort into the relationship. According to our hypothesis their emotional attraction towards one another must grow

because they are treating one another as important. At some point or another they start a sexual relationship which in most communities (including sexually "liberated" ones) represents a bigger investment of risk on the part of the woman than it does of the man since she is more likely to receive disapprobation from her society for sexual activity than he is but also, and more significantly, the opportunity for pregnancy presents much greater social, health and economic risks to the woman than it does to the man. At this point therefore, even if the relationship continues to be equal in terms of time and effort applied, the woman, because of her much higher risk exposure, has in one sense given more to the relationship. To put it another way, her high-risk behaviour is consistent with a much more high value relationship than the one she actually has while his relatively low risk behaviour remains consistent with a lower value relationship.

There is now an imbalance between W and M in terms of the risk that they have exposed themselves to and therefore in terms of the value they hope to get from the relationship to justify the risk. However, the hypothesis is that emotions follow actions and since W has now performed a high value action with M it follows that her feelings for M must increase to match it. M on the other hand has incurred a lower risk (essentially he has made less effort) and so his feelings for W can, and will, remain at a level appropriate for a casual, even platonic, relationship.

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If at this point M and W continue to share one another's lives constructively, then there is no real problem because as M continues to treat W as if she is important to him then his emotional attraction to her will continue to increase. However what happens if, for whatever reason, M reduces his effort towards W? Now W will be the one to be chasing, so to speak, because she has the higher risk exposure and therefore the greater need to maintain the relationship. But, remember the hypothesis, the more she tries to bring the relationship back together, the more effort she makes and as she makes more effort to draw M back towards her the hypothesis suggests that her emotional attraction for M will increase. Thus his indifference towards her causes her to want him more and to increase her reluctance to let go. If we now take this a stage further and have M become abusive (in whatever sense, possibly nothing more than consistent neglect and bad manners) then W has to invest even greater skill and effort in her attempts to diffuse the problems or correct them and since her emotions are still following her actions they too will continue to increase. The more talented W is, the more effort she can apply and the stronger the emotional bond will become.

I don't claim that this hypothesis, that emotions follow actions, is a total explanation nor that it is fully valid for all apparently similar situations but I do think that it offers one possible means of explaining why attractive and intelligent women should remain in relationships with

males who fall far short of the women's aspirations.

Although the preceding example has concentrated on a good woman and an inadequate male, the hypothesis works the other way around as well. Men who invest a lot of energy in trying to woo a woman, or who treat a woman as if she is special and important to them, will have emotions that far exceed what might be appropriate for the reality of their association. Such men generally go on to make complete fools of themselves and the more foolish (and hence more risky) their activities, the greater the emotional pull that they feel. It is a sad and destructive cycle for either gender.

However if the hypothesis is accepted as valid then it also offers good news!

First any love struck man who is wondering how he will ever live without the idol of his spurned affections and any woman crying at home wondering what she did to deserve such cruel neglect and wanting to start afresh with a real man, can now start formulating a solution. Likewise anybody who is in a committed relationship that is going badly and wants to improve it can also have a fresh hope.

If emotions follow actions then W can reduce her attraction to M by simply no longer treating him as if he were special. She can even increase the speed of the process by treating him as if he were contemptible. This works because those emotions go wherever the actions lead them, just as the carriages always follow the locomotive. If W stops telephoning M, doesn't make any

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effort to be available for him, doesn't wait in for him, doesn't do his shopping or wash his clothes and if, furthermore W actually takes definite steps to treat M as if he were something nasty to be avoided, then pretty quickly her emotional attraction for him will subside. The process proposed by the hypothesis is entirely reversible.

The same is true for the man whose flowers, artful poems and cuddly teddy bears are spurned by the object of his forlorn desire: If he ceases to perform the actions involved in making such a fool of himself, his attraction for the woman will also diminish.

Perhaps even better still, the principle should also work just as well for those who are in committed relationships that they want to recharge, maintain and improve. If your marriage has gone stale then the first step towards an improvement would be to start treating your spouse as if he (or she) is the most attractive and desirable person in the world. You might not, at this moment, think they are attractive or desirable, you might find the idea ridiculous or even be totally weary with their presence, but your emotional railway carriages will follow the track that your locomotive actions lead them along. Treat your husband or wife as if they are special and in due course your emotional attraction for them will also deepen and broaden. Within a failing or unsatisfying relationship it would also therefore be valid to ask whether either partner had been acting carelessly towards the other — if P has, for example, been very pre-

occupied with work and as a result has been taking Q's contribution for granted, been failing to give attention to Q, or has been careless in speech or behaviour towards Q then, according to the hypothesis, P's feelings for Q will become less and less feelings of loving tenderness and increasingly feelings of contempt and irritation. Knowing the process allows effective corrective action to be initiated and the warmth of the relationship to be restored.

Applying the hypothesis might also help those who wish to remain faithful to their partners to minimise their risks of being tempted into infidelity. For example, if two colleagues are labouring together on a project and supporting and encouraging one another in their shared work then an emotional attraction will also grow because their actions towards one another are very positive and supportive and they are treating one another as if they had a high value relationship. This will be true even if their original motivation for co-operating was entirely for the benefits of their careers or finances. As the emotional bonds strengthen, as they will, then the temptation to step beyond a merely vocational association and into something more erotic also increase. With this in mind, any person who wants to remain faithful to their partners could consider whether their activities with other people, including those they are not presently attracted to, might cause an unhelpful attraction to develop and how it might be avoided.

Ultimately we are all responsible for our own choices but in all cases

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the hypothesis suggests that nobody needs to be helplessly at the whim of their emotions and that everybody can do something to tame and control emotions that are unhelpful and that encourage them to make bad choices, and to strengthen emotions that are helpful and encourage good choices.

So, to conclude, the proposed hypothesis can be stated in the following ways: A person's feelings will follow their actions. P's attraction towards Q depends on what P does for Q, not on what Q does for P. Treat somebody as if you love them and you will come to feel love for them; treat somebody as if you dislike them, and you will come to dislike them.

I am not suggesting that this hypothesis should be applied simplistically or that other factors should be overlooked, but, nonetheless, this hypothesis does allow a coherent and rational explanation to be provided for why competent, attractive, ambitious women should so often be found devoting themselves to men who are unworthy of the love they receive and incapable of fulfilling the woman's dreams and why men should foolishly continue to pursue women who have already thoroughly spurned them. It also suggests that each of us can actively seek to generate the emotions that will help us to make the choices that, rationally, we want to make.⁶⁸

"REAL LIFE LEADERSHIP OR RULES AND RIGIDITY?" (30 MARCH 2005)

When we first started exploring Taken in Hand relationships we looked at a lot of information. We knew we were attracted to the control dynamic of my husband being in charge but what that meant exactly was unclear to us. Our ideas about this have evolved quite a bit since we first attempted to bring this dynamic into our relationship.

When we started we did what I think a lot of couples do: we implemented rules. We thought this was what it meant to lead. For some people rules are very important. We found them cumbersome and my husband did not like the feeling of policing me to see if I was following all the rules he set out. My husband is a very easygoing person and we figured out that he did not really care about all this stuff we had figured we needed to make rules about. Micromanagement was a lot of work, and given our lifestyle it was not very practical. How can you say such-and-such needs to be done every day with a couple of kids and a variable schedule? We also found we did not really care if X was done or not. It just seemed that it was impossible for us to have the consistency we wanted this way.

So we chunked the rules out the window and started over from the beginning. We did not want to give up the control, because we found that my husband's control in our relationship—his leadership in our relationship—was a very powerful thing. When we reflected back on when we felt his leadership was most effective and most powerful, what we found was that we preferred the times he acted on his in-

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instincts and made decisions based on what he thought we needed on any given day. He could still say that he wanted X done if he wanted to, but he did not need to make a rule about it. He could just say X is bothering me, so today we deal with X.

My husband's leadership for us is not about rigid, micromanaging controls, it is more about the day-to-day things that arise. He can still make decisions about whatever he wants, but we do not feel the need to have a list of rules posted or written anywhere. We do not have a contract, and we do not have any kind of progress reports, or scheduled discussions about how he finds my behaviour in any given day or week. We find all that rigidity stifling. It just did not work for us. We prefer to leave it open ended. He can still make rules if he wants to, but the few he does make I know are very important to him. Mostly we just go about our daily lives and when he feels he needs to take control, he does. He just leads us as a couple day in and day out. It is a less rigid kind of leadership but it works for us very well. That is the beauty of Taken in Hand relationships. Each couple does what works for *them*.⁶⁹

"DO THE RIGHT THING - BE THE CAPTAIN OF YOUR SHIP" (3 APRIL 2005)

This is for my fellow males who cherish their wives, girlfriends, or significant others. For decades I struggled with the thought of being part of a very limited and kinky minority; but with the advent of the internet and wonderful forums such

as this, I was amazed at the number of individuals with similar interests and relieved that I was in fact normal. But I still wondered whether a loving female partner would want to be taken in hand. Well, I spent years reading posts here and elsewhere, married my soulmate, and what I learned from all of these sources was indeed surprising. More women than I ever dreamed desire, strong, loving, protective, and dominant males.

This may come as a surprise to the ladies that read this, but men want to please their loved ones, but they have very fragile egos. Most women, particularly as they enter middle age desire a feeling of protection and security from their chosen man; and if he truly loves her he becomes anxious to satisfy her desires.

The problem is, in an age of independent women and feminism, confusion rules in determining what he needs to do. He wants to do the right thing and fears doing the wrong (remember the desire to please, fragile ego, and confusion), so, in an attempt to do the right thing, he does nothing.

Boom! He has just done the wrong thing and stepped on a land mine. Everything has backfired. She is upset and depressed; he is clueless as to what happened. So, with dazed confusion and shattered ego he performs the typical male maneuver for domestic distress. He retreats into silence and things get worse.

Men and women think and react differently. She wants strength but he shows only weakness. She wants protection but is left with insecurity. She wants him to take her in hand!

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Here are some principles I have learned.

Be the captain of your ship! Make a decision and take action. Lead firmly, but gently. Do not ask anything from her that you would not first do yourself. If sacrifice or hardship is required you will be the first to answer the call to duty.

You will love and protect her even if it means protecting her from herself. She has chosen you to be her champion and hero. She trusts and believes in you. Her needs always come first.

Do not worry about making a mistake. If you feel she needs a spanking then put her over your knee and warm her bottom appropriately. She wants to feel secure in your strength. An incorrect action will be forgotten, inaction will be remembered.

Do not worry about hurting her. If you truly love her and possess reasonable judgment, you will do what is appropriate. Take time to learn what is correct; mistakes will be made, but it is better to err with action than inaction.

Do not retreat into silence or ignore her. A spanking may cause some discomfort to her bottom, but being ignored will break her heart. No spanking can compare to the pain she will feel then.

Do not be a bully or micromanage. She is your partner; you joined because you had confidence and trusted her. Talk together, encourage her dreams, and listen to what she has to say.

A Taken In Hand relationship is like any other; it is an evolutionary process. Don't expect a perfect fit overnight. It takes time, patience,

and consistency. Mistakes will be made, but so will adjustments. If you love her enough to risk your ego and persevere, the rewards will be tremendous.⁷⁰

"WANTING THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM - A MAN IN CHARGE" (3 APRIL 2005)

I believe in the "impossible dream"—i.e., to run where the brave dare not go... and the infinite thrill of the roller coaster. If someone cannot follow their star then what is it all about? Why bother at all?

Home, to me, means somewhere I will always feel safe and loved—and yes, of course, somewhere I can relax and let down my hair.

But, to me, this means a place where my longings and desires are met—i.e., I can be at peace with myself because I no longer have to fight my demons—and by demons I mean things I always felt so guilty about in the past, because I thought they were wrong. This is a place where I will be taken in hand—both physically and verbally in a lovingly dominant way.

Also, I want to please a man by giving him my respect and obedience. Quite frankly, I do want to watch my P's and Q's with a man actually. I want to feel the thrill of the ride, but also the safety of knowing I am well strapped in and cannot fall—because it both turns me on and makes me feel safe at the same time—otherwise it is only a game in my mind—but that's just me. Each and every one of us seems to be coming at this from a different an-

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gle—and therefore, each to their own.

But ultimately we all want the same thing—a man to be in charge.⁷¹

"HE'S IN CHARGE... BUT I DO IT MY WAY" (6 APRIL 2005)

Which of the following is preferable to you? A relationship in which there is one undisputed leader, or a relationship in which there is a slight exchange of power but the one who isn't in charge has a lot of freedom to act autonomously? Almost two leaders but one is a bit more in charge than the other.

In a business sense—and really every great relationship has business type aspects to it—one leader and one leader only works best. However, the workers have to be agreeable to working at that business in the first place. Both boss and workers need to be comfortable in their respective positions.

The most successful businesses are the ones that have one really good leader—and if he's a really good leader, he will certainly take the time to understand his workers and give them what they need and want. If you want to get the best out of your workforce, you have to listen to them and make sure they are happy. An unhappy employee could spell disaster for the business.

So when we bring this down to us and our partner, we have these choices. We married him so we want to be here. We obviously love him. He wants to be the undisputed leader—doesn't want anyone to question his authority. You, on the other

hand, have needs and wants. So in order to get what you want, you might ask for almost half the power in the relationship. If so, you might find that that leads to fights and arguments because sometimes you each want different outcomes.

Now, if you make your husband the leader with all the power, then you have to do as he asks without argument. You can question, but not argue. You can raise potential problems, but you have to do so on the understanding that ultimately, he is the one in charge.

If you take this route, your husband needs to be a *very* good and wise man with all this power. He has to understand what your needs and wants are so he can keep you happy. Being in the subordinate position does not mean not telling him what your needs and wishes are! And if he ensures that your wishes and needs are met, then, like the successful boss or the well-respected commander, he will find that you will *want* to follow his leadership.

So what's a girl to do?

In our house Gary has the leadership power. But I am a kind of independent girl—or brat or whatever. My theory is what he doesn't know or see, can't hurt me! I'm not being unsafe or malicious or even doing things behind his back. Not at all. But if my agenda doesn't fit his exactly and we are both still happy, why can't I do what I do?

He wants me to rest on my bed for 90 minutes twice a day. I think I should rest when I am feeling tired and not wear myself out otherwise. Is that being defiant or am I just us-

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ing what works for me and still falling under the law? Maybe your husband wants you to get all your housework done before you use the computer. Well as long as it's done (and *really* done) before the kids get home from school, don't you think it's okay to do it after lunch as long as it gets done? You see what I mean? Not abusing your husband's leadership, just playing with the rules.

I'm sure there are those who would say that my "jiggling" the rules amounts to lying by omission, but I wouldn't lie to Gary if he downright asked. I just like my life on my terms sometimes. I am not micromanaged, but sometimes I like that little bit of extraneity in doing it my way.⁷²

"A WOMAN MUST KNOW THAT HER MAN CARES" (9 APRIL 2005)

With rare exceptions, I have found that specific rules create more problems than they solve. Being a husband is not about being a warden.

There are some times and places where taking a stand is very important. At other times, it does not much matter.

While leadership and accompanying rules are important in those occasional storms that beset any marriage, micromanagement may prove counterproductive in seasons of less stress. Unless he is an absolute fool, no man thinks that he is going to be in charge of everything all of the time. It does not happen with children. It most certainly never happens with wives.

Beneath all the hocus-pocus, what women want in a man is someone able to put them first. Sometimes it may amount to no more than holding and listening. At other times, it may involve helping her unload a ton of emotional baggage. Still, at other times, it may be to keep her from becoming her own worst enemy.

Being a husband is more art than science. That which husbands do is difficult to measure and quantify. While I am sure someone will try, to my knowledge, no one has yet written the Idiot's Guide to Being a Husband. (Being a groom is the easy part.)

Being a husband is about knowing one woman well rather than a thousand women superficially—the secret being that to know one woman well is to understand the thousand. To have slept with a hundred women is no better than to have read the first chapter of a hundred books and never finished a single one. It is like being born a hundred times without living a single life.

Every woman is unique. All are mysterious. Yet, all are transparent. At their core, they are very much the same. Understanding a woman requires more common sense than gnostic-style knowledge. That about which a woman speaks is not always what is really on her mind.

A husband must have patience and empathy as well as a firm hand. It is on the job training. Women do test (Race's Pushing at the walls).^{*} It

^{*} See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20160407145204/http://www.takeninhand>>

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is normal. It is natural. It is a self-protection mechanism for women to find out whether they are—as if questioning a magic mirror—still “the fairest (most desirable, most important) in the land.”?

Men lose women because they fail to pay them attention. The trick is to know what type of attention a woman requires at a particular moment. Seldom will a woman tell a man her specific needs. She expects him to figure that out for himself—and will come to despise him if he does not do so!

It is not the rules that matter so much as the woman whom they are designed to protect. Rules change. For example, because of where we once lived, I required my wife to carry a large aluminum-shell flashlight if she walked out to check the mailbox at night or walked across the street to visit neighbors on that side of the house.

(The roadside mailbox was different side of the corner lot than the driveway and necessitated walking a tree-laden lawn in an urban environment where the streetlights did not illuminate. Even I carried a flashlight—which can be a devastating weapon—with me.)

I once spanked my wife because she failed to take a flashlight with her after dark. What she did not want me to know about could have hurt her.

Of course, she would not have told me if I did not ask. I happened to ask because she inadvertently told me she went over to see the neigh-

bors for a moment and, not seeing it, I wondered if she had forgotten the flashlight. She said that she did not think she needed it. That is typical.

Now, we live in a different place. Carrying a flashlight for self-protection is no longer important. The rule itself was never important. Getting the mail was not that important. Visiting the neighbors was important to her. Her safety, however, was very important to me. I cared.

Whether by rules or less formal means, a woman must know that a man cares. In the end, that is all that matters.⁷³

“A GENTLE GIANT WHO LOVES AND SERVES THE WOMAN HE LEADS” (14 APRIL 2005)

My husband came up to me a little over a week ago and held me tightly. Then he told me that he wanted to hold me more and he knows that it is my love language. I was so overwhelmed by that. I was so deeply touched.

My husband is a man who loves to give. I have always known him to give of himself. He is a servant. Not a slave but a man who enjoys helping others. He is always the first one to respond in a crisis, never fearing for his own safety. If someone needs a job he will search for one, if one of our children need him he is there with advice or a shoulder to cry on. At work he is known as the problem solver and he really is one.

When he was speaking about love languages it touched my heart like nothing else ever has. I know what

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his is and I admire him and just enjoy being with him.

We have had a Taken In Hand relationship for almost a year now and I know that he can assert himself at any time with me. But our relationship has been a little different in the past six weeks. I almost died from a severe allergic reaction to an antibiotic and my husband was planning my funeral. Then while I was recovering from that I became ill. Anyway.. He has wanted me to take it easy and totally recover.

There have been times through this health issue that he took me in hand, however, not physically, because at the time he didn't feel I could handle it. It all goes along with his generosity in understanding how I feel. Even to put up with some of the attitude I have expressed in recent weeks tells me that he loves me dearly, and I do him. I also know that he won't put up with a bunch of nonsense.

Where the rubber meets the road I feel so blessed to have him in my life. I love who he is and how he not only responds with me but to others as well.

I have been able to return to my classroom and I have pictures of my family up. One of the parents of a student came up to me and was looking at a photo of my husband and myself and said, "He is a gentle giant." And he really is!

He is gentle, kind, trustworthy, loving and assertive when need be.⁷⁴

My wife and I have been living in a Taken In Hand relationship ever since we married seven years ago. For the most, we have been able to maintain our focus on our relationship, but when confronted by the realities of modern life, even the best of us sometimes slip into old bad habits and unconstructive ways of interacting. Having said this, there are things you can do which will help to keep your established roles fresh and vital.

For many of us, it is the tide of feeling between the man's masculine and the woman's feminine nature that makes the Taken In Hand relationship so attractive. If you are able to keep this in mind then perhaps you will be able to discover within the context of your day-to-day life the key to keeping this a consistent part of your relationship.

Many women who are attracted to Taken In Hand are attracted to it because they love the idea of having their husband be in charge. They are also attracted to the idea of having their husband spank them for discipline but much of what a woman responds to in a disciplinary spanking is the feeling of being controlled or manhandled by her man. DD folk often think in terms of being punished but there are other ways of being controlled, and being spanked does not necessarily have to mean being punished.

A man can establish his role as the head of the household by reminding the woman of who is in charge. There are times when I put my wife over my knee so she can be reacquainted with our established roles. This way she feels comforted know-

**"IS THE DISCIPLINE FOCUS LIMITING YOUR
RELATIONSHIP?" (15 APRIL 2005)**

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ing I am in charge of our relationship, that I am paying attention to her, and I am willing to be firm with her when I think she needs it. The man does not need to wait till the woman acts out in some way that requires a disciplinary response.

It is unwise to think of Taken In Hand as being exclusively about the man punishing a “faulty” woman. Men are certainly no more or less faulty than women. They can also be the source of disconnection in the relationship. Believe me, I have my moments, LOL! But in our relationship, I do discipline my wife. Is it always fair? Maybe not, but fairness is not the real issue. The issue is: how do we connect as man and woman and how do we reconnect when our relationship has become contentious? The truth is we have developed a relationship where I am in charge and have authority to sanction her behavior. I no longer worry about whether spanking my wife for disobedience or for being contentious is fair. What makes this arrangement fair is that after a discipline spanking we have reconnected. By each of us having our needs met it results in a relationship that is happy and harmonious.

I think everyone of us goes through a phase early on where we are experimenting—trying to figure out how all this works. What we have discovered is that it is absolutely vital in establishing a Taken In Hand relationship that the man must have real authority. If not, it becomes nothing more than a scene. We need our way of relating to be more than a scene. We need it to be

the real stuff of living together as husband and wife.

Plenty of couples create elaborate scenes that result in a spanking or some other disciplinary response. They find this level of interaction satisfying. Hey, if it works then you do not need anything more. But for Taken In Hand couples the authority of the husband must be real. He must have the authority to command obedience and to discipline his wife when he thinks it is necessary. Once he has established this fact, so much for the couple falls into place. He need not be domineering, yet he must be confident and willing to be dominant when it is called for.

So...when my wife behaves in a way that I find objectionable she knows without a doubt that I will be firm. My wife is a reasonable and mature woman, yet she loves knowing that I will spank her when I think it is necessary. Not as a prelude to sex (although there is nothing wrong with that) but because I have the authority to sanction her behavior. Just that knowledge alone, even if it does not need to be demonstrated very often, creates an atmosphere between us that is not only erotic, but satisfies a deep place in her.

Ultimately, each couple will discover what works. It takes time and both of you will make mistakes. It is very important that you be kind and patient with each other and yourselves. As the boss often points out, if the relationship is to be sustainable you must view Taken In Hand as something more than spanking and punishment. Leading and guiding a relationship is multidimensional and should not be only about catching

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the “naughty” wife in some misbehavior.

Don't get me wrong, I do spank my wife for discipline. However, there are any number of ways which a husband can and should demonstrate his leadership and control without having the relationship entirely revolve around waiting for his wife to misbehave so that he can discipline her. In the long run, if that is what your relationship is all about you will find that view limiting and I believe unworkable. Leading our relationship means being positive and focused on her needs. It means being supportive and showing her a whole lot of love and concern for her wellbeing. This is the real challenge and joy of leading our relationship. Disciplining my wife is definitely a part of our relationship, but our relationship is so much more. What happens in our relationship between those moments of discipline is what really makes our relationship work.

There are a number of articles on the Taken In Hand site that might help you see other possibilities in a Taken In Hand relationship.⁷⁵

“FAMILIARITY BREEDS CONTEMPT” (19 APRIL 2005)

“Excessive familiarity is the bane of social happiness,” wrote William Godwin in his book, *The Enquirer*, in 1797 (page 86). He was making the argument that there is a tendency, when individuals live together, for them to begin to fail to treat each other with respect and kindness, and that this incivility is pernicious. He was advocating retaining in close

relationships a certain respectful distance.

One of the dangers of excessive familiarity he pointed to, I think cannot be over-emphasised, particularly to men who are in Taken In Hand relationships. Whilst some women no doubt take masochistic pleasure in being harshly judged, severely chastised, shouted at, or glared at, most would probably hate that. For many of us, angry outbursts, bitter tones, resentful silences, spiteful words, and withering looks are painful and likely to be harmful.

If you are a man in a male-led relationship then unless you are quite sure that the woman you love and lead enjoys being on the sharp end of this sort of negativity, it would be wise to strive to make your control positive, kind and respectful instead. Or at least to enquire what your amour's preferences are in this.

Those men in charge to whom I myself have felt drawn (for example, my grandfather, a teacher at school, a rabbi) did not command obedience by raising their voices, impugning motives, or by casting threatening frowns at those under their authority; they led with quiet confidence and understated, subtle control that built up rather than tore down, that drew others in rather than alienating them. Here is what William Godwin had to say on this:

The passionate man, who feels himself continually prompted to knock everyone down that seems to him pertinacious and perverse, never fails to expatiate upon the efficacy of this mode of correcting error, and to

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satirise with great vehemence the Utopian absurdity of him who would set them right by ways of mildness and expostulation.

The dogmatist, who, satisfied of the truth of his own opinions, treats all other modes of thinking as absurd, and can practise no forbearance for the prejudices of his neighbours, can readily inform you of the benefit which the mind receives from a rude shock, and the unceasing duration of errors which are only encountered with kindness and reason.

The man who lives in a state of continual waspishness and bickering, easily alleges in his favour the salutary effects which arise from giving pain, and that men are not to be cured of their follies but by making them fervently feel the ill consequences that attend on them.*

Worse—and it really is worse if the research of *John Gottman* is to be believed—is a lack of graciousness when the other person tries to repair the damage. “In the education of youth,” wrote Godwin, “no resource is more frequent than to a harsh tone and a peremptory manner. The child does amiss, and he is rebuked. If he overlook this treatment and make overtures of kindness, the answer is, No, indeed, I shall take no notice of you, for you have done wrong.” (*The Enquirer*, 1797, page 87-8, Essay X: Of Cohabitation) John Gottman contends that one of the most important predictors of divorce is whether, when one spouse makes a “positive bid”—reaching out to the other in some way—the other fails to react

positively. As William Godwin wrote:

All this is the excess of familiarity.

The tyrant... practises this, and applauds himself for his virtue. He reviews his conduct with self-complacence; he sees in fancy the admirable consequences that will result from it; and, if it fails, he congratulates himself at least that he has proceeded with the most exemplary virtue.

He does not know that, through the whole scene, he has been only indulging the most shameful vices. He had merely been accumulating a certain portion of black bile, and in this proceeding he has found a vent for it. There was no atom of virtue or benevolence in his conduct. He was exercising his despotism in security, because its object was unable to resist. He was giving scope to the overflowings of his spite, and the [person] under his direction, was the unfortunate victim.†

If you are in control in your relationship, do not forget the importance of *self-control*, gentleness, civility. The master should be a man, not a monster; a protector, not a bully. He should take care to remain respectful, and perhaps, as Godwin suggests, it might not be a bad idea sometimes to be just a little less familiar:

The most fundamental of all the principles of morality is the consideration and deference that man owes to man. [...]

* (William Godwin: William Godwin: *The Enquirer*, 1797, page 86-7, Essay X: Of Cohabitation)

† (William Godwin: *The Enquirer*, 1797, page 88, Essay X: Of Cohabitation)

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[A]nger and ill-humour have very little tendency to impress upon a prejudiced spectator an opinion of the justice of your cause. The direct result of your proceeding, is to fill him with indignation against your despotism, to inspire him with a deep sense of the indignity to which he is subjected, and to perpetuate in his mind a detestation of the lesson that occasioned his pain.

If we would ascertain the true means of conviction, we have only to substitute in our minds, instead of [our spouse], a [person] with whom we have slight acquaintance, and no vicious habits of familiarity. I will suppose that we have no prejudice against this [person] but every disposition to benefit him. I would then ask any man of urbane manners and a kind temper, whether he would endeavour to correct the error [...] of this stranger [...] by forbidding looks, harsh tones and severe language?

No, he would [...] know that to inspire hatred to himself and distaste to his lessons was not the most promising road to instruction. He would endeavour to do justice to his views of the subject in discussion; he would communicate his ideas with all practicable perspicuity; but he would communicate them with every mark of conciliation and friendly attention. He would not mix them with tones of acrimony, and airs of lofty command. [...] But [...] when upon a footing of undue familiarity, [we treat] our wife [...] in great degree as we do children. We lay aside the arts of ingenious persuasion; we forsake the mildness of expostulation; and we expect them to bow to the despotism of command or the impatience of anger.

The ill-humour which is so prevalent through all the different walks of life, is the result of familiarity... If we did not see each other too frequently, we should accustom ourselves to act

reasonably and with urbanity. But, according to a well-known maxim, familiarity breeds contempt. The first and most fundamental principle in the intercourse of man and man, is reverence... Reverence is a certain collectedness of the mind, a pause during which we involuntarily impress ourselves with the importance of circumstances and the dignity of persons. [...] It is true that genuine virtue requires of us a certain frankness and unreserve. But it is not less true that it requires of us a quality in some degree contrasted with this, that we set a guard upon the door of our lips, that we carefully watch over our passions, that we never forget what we owe to ourselves, and that we maintain a vigilant consciousness strictly animadverting and commenting upon the whole series of our actions.*

No doubt the exaggerated politeness of formal English etiquette is not to everyone's taste, and it is important for those in a relationship to feel comfortable with one another, but I can't help thinking that we can learn something from William Godwin's argument. As he concluded: "It is a vulgar task to destroy; the difficulty is to build." (page 92, *ibid.*)⁷⁶

"FROM BDSM TO TAKEN IN HAND" (19 APRIL 2005)

Even though I never practiced any BDSM, I owe much to their philosophy for having guided me to where I am now. Much of their practice is a bit stilted and exaggerated, but it is based on primal desires.

* (William Godwin: *The Enquirer*, 1797, page 89-92, Essay X: Of Cohabitation)

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These desires and needs all seem to be derived from sadism, masochism, domination, and submission. This may seem to be an over-simplification, but the more I contemplate it, the more it seems to boil down to these elements. Even love itself, as basic as it may seem, appears to have these elements in it. In varying degrees, I think we all incorporate these four elements in our interactions with others.

Almost all of what I know about BDSM is based on what I have read by lurking on the soc.subculture.bondage-bdsm news group. The idea of deliberately enacting fantasies is what really intrigued me about the group. I found the power exchange element particularly appealing.

BDSM seems to be a harmonious blend of some very harsh fantasies enveloped by gentle empathy. Most of these fantasies are enacted in staged scenes after serious planning, agreements, and explicit exchanges of consent.

One particularly odd thing I noticed about some of the scene descriptions is the practice of something called “after care”. Apparently, some scenes cause folk to get extremely emotional and they need to be “brought down” gently. It seems that some of the fantasy enactments become a bit too real for some of the participants. These activities can be very dangerous, both physically and psychologically.

The BDSM lifestyle—or what I have read and understood of it—seemed to be almost what I wanted but somehow missed an indefinable mark. One might compare it to being

on the verge of sneezing but not quite being able to attain the relief of finishing it.

Then I encountered *Taken In Hand*, which is right on the edge where fantasy meets reality. Also, on a certain level, somewhat similar to base-jumping or sky-diving, it appears irresponsible to one who is accustomed to BDSM scenes. I can't remember who said it, but *Taken In Hand* is lived by the seat of the pants, with no rules other than what is made up as time passes.

This is in sharp contrast with acceptable BDSM practices, which may seem to some to be almost overburdened with rules of consent, safety, and conduct. These practices differ from *Taken In Hand* in that they are planned procedures of what will be done when by whom to whom with whom as a scene. Even the so-called “24/7 lifestyles” are pretty much extended scenes that can be stopped, re-planned, and re-started. In my admittedly limited understanding: BDSM enacts fantasies; *Taken In Hand* lives them. BDSM concentrates on the activities; *Taken In Hand* concentrates on the relationships.

The most dangerous *Taken In Hand* concept, from the BDSM point of view, is consensual non-consent, which seems to them too vague to be truly safe, hand-in-hand with the lack of a safe-word in most cases. From the BDSM perspective, this is much like driving a car full-throttle after bleeding out all the brake fluid and dismantling the emergency brake.

In consensual non-consent there is always room for doubt, a chance of

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overstepping an unexpectedly-changed boundary. In a situation with overt consent such an event is far less likely to occur. As risky as their acts are, BDSM folk still want all the rules and consents plain and clear. I think that the lack of consent—or rather, the seeming appearance thereof—is the single scariest thing about Taken In Hand to the BDSM mind.⁷⁷

“BDSM ... KINK WITH SOME PSYCHOLOGICAL PAYOFF” (22 APRIL 2005)

BDSM is kink with some psychological payoff. I think that BDSM is a process by which the partners are able to feed their basic human needs for value, love, acceptance, security, and adequacy (a sense of being capable). I experimented with BDSM scenes four times before finding Taken In Hand. The psychological aspects of BDSM were the allure and the reward.

When putting my physical safety into the hands of a dominant man, I was trusting that he would play out the scene in a way that kept me safe. By emerging from the scene in safety, I felt a surge in my own sense of security. I had experienced a new and risky situation safely. That reinforced my belief that I can be safe in the world in a variety of situations. BDSM play can involve pain; some of mine did. The ability to work through the rigors of pain and play my part in the scene reinforced to me that I am a capable woman.

When the scenes ended, I had experienced the acceptance of myself as a partner in play. I felt accepted as

a woman because the dominant man had seen my body and it was desirable to him for our encounter. Similar to a date, there is something very affirming about being selected as a play partner. Before and during the scene, I felt special and important.

In the context of a BDSM encounter, which is different from kink within an ongoing relationship, the dominant person normally is not in love with the submissive one. Still, there is a sense of being loved because the dominant person gives attention, care and safety. It is not the same as being loved but the feeling of love is present.

BDSM did not bring me soul satisfaction even though there were some psychological benefits from playing. For me, there were emotional, mental and physical investments in the scenes. However, I did not realize any long-term return on my investments.

I chose to move beyond BDSM because negotiating a scene does not involve the deeper aspect of a “meeting of minds” in an ongoing relationship. Intimacy is not a requirement for BDSM. BDSM did not address my need for connection or for being understood. BDSM was a sugar high. I believe that a Taken In Hand relationship will be nutrition for my soul.⁷⁸

“THE VIRGIN AND THE GIPSY, BY D. H. LAWRENCE” (24 APRIL 2005)

One night when I was a child of about eleven years old, I crept downstairs in the late night darkness to find out what my parents were

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watching on television. Standing in the unlit hall by the door next to the stairs, I peered at the television through the crack between the door and the doorframe, and watched, mesmerised and dry-mouthed, heart pounding in fear that my parents might discover me.

It was not long before I was aching from standing half on the stairs and holding my head at an unnatural angle, but I could not tear myself away. Eventually, it became altogether too steamy for me and I quietly went up to bed, my cheeks burning.

What was it I had watched? I had to know! I needed to know. Luckily, where I lived at the time, we only had a few television channels, so the next morning, with the help of the previous night's TV listings, I was able to determine that what my parents had been watching was a film adaptation of D.H. Lawrence's short novel, *The Virgin and the Gipsy*. At least, I was pretty sure it wasn't the listed Open University programme on statistical mechanics or the sports roundup.

The following Saturday, I went to a local bookshop and bought a copy of *The Virgin and the Gipsy*, took it to my room, and read it from cover to cover without stopping. Then I read it again. The power of D.H. Lawrence's prose pulled me in and gripped me intensely. I was the virgin, Yvette. I felt her inner strength, her disgust, her desire; I identified with her attraction to psychological power and strength, and with her rejection of her father's harsh and cruel "rectory morality". I admired her ability to keep her inner life pri-

vate from those to whom she did not care to reveal herself.

Evidently this short, sharp, exquisite novel does not speak to everyone. Some readers seem to find it boring and annoying. Many readers discussing the book on this page* seem to me to have missed the very soul of the book. In fact, it was because I stumbled upon that discussion that I re-read the book, interested to know whether it would still speak to me. It does. It is taut with masochistic intensity. Perhaps you have to have a touch of psychological sadomasochism in you to appreciate *The Virgin and the Gipsy*. What I mean by this is that Yvette lives with and survives what Lyn Cowan calls "oppositional extremity":

Masochism is an art of holding oneself in oppositional extremity. The masochist sees himself living—appears to live—in *extremis*, at the very edge of danger, madness, death. ... Often opposite feelings like pride and humiliation are present simultaneously, both torturous, both pleasurable. ... There is pride in this cliff-hanging extremity, in maintaining these impossible oppositions without plunging over the edge. It is an extreme pride, a pride of extremity, of going to extremes and surviving.

Here are a few quotes from *The Virgin and the Gipsy* to give you a taste of its atmosphere. But if you haven't read it, why not read the whole thing instead?

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20130923215309/http://constantreader.com/discussions/virginandthegypsy.htm>>

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[The gipsy] looked at Yvette as he passed, staring her full in the eyes, with his pariah's bold yet dishonest stare. Something hard inside her met his stare. But the surface of her body seemed to turn to water. Nevertheless, something hard in her registered the peculiar pure lines of his face, of his straight, pure nose, of his cheeks and temples. The curious dark, suave purity of all his body, outlined in the green jersey: a purity like a living sneer.

And as he loped slowly past her, on his flexible hips, it seemed to her still that he was stronger than she was. Of all the men she had ever seen, this one was the only one who was stronger than she was, in her own kind of strength, her own kind of understanding.

[...]

Yvette felt there was some duplicity somewhere. But she didn't mind. She hated with the cold, acrid hatred of a child the rectory interior, the sort of putridity in the life. She liked that big, swarthy, wolf-like gipsy-woman, with the big gold rings in her ears, the pink scarf over her wavy black hair, the tight bodice of brown velvet, the green, fan-like skirt. She liked her dusky, strong, relentless hands, that had pressed so firm, like wolf's paws, in Yvette's own soft palm. She liked her. She liked the danger and the covert fearlessness of her. She liked her covert, unyielding sex, that was immoral, but with a hard, defiant pride of its own. Nothing would ever get that woman under. She would despise the rectory and the rectory morality, utterly! She would strangle Granny with one hand. And she would have the same contempt for Daddy and for Uncle Fred, as men, as she would have for fat old slobbery Rover, the Newfoundland dog. A great, sardonic female contempt, for

such domesticated dogs, calling themselves men.

And the gipsy man himself! Yvette quivered suddenly, as if she had seen his big, bold eyes upon her, with the naked insinuation of desire in them. The absolutely naked insinuation of desire made her life prone and powerless in the bed, as if a drug had cast her in a new molten mould.

[...]

The gipsy stood at the back door, under the steep dark bank where the larches grew. The long brooms flourished from one hand, and from the other hung various objects of shining copper and brass: a saucepan, a candlestick, plates of beaten copper. The man himself was neat and dapper, almost rakish, in his dark green cap and double-breasted green check coat. But his manner was subdued, very quiet: and at the same time proud, with a touch of condescension and aloofness.

"Anything today, lady?" he said, looking at Aunt Cissie with dark, shrewd, searching eyes, but putting a very quiet tenderness into his voice.

Aunt Cissie saw how handsome he was, saw the flexible curve of his lips under the line of black moustache, and she was fluttered. The merest hint of roughness or aggression on the man's part would have made her shut the door contemptuously in his face. But he managed to insinuate such a subtle suggestion of submission into his male bearing, that she began to hesitate.

"The candlestick is lovely!" said Yvette. "Did you make it?"

And she looked up at the man with her naïve, childlike eyes, that were as capable of double meanings as his own.

"Yes lady!" He looked back into her eyes for a second, with that naked suggestion of desire which acted on her like a spell, and robbed her of her

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will. Her tender face seemed to go in-to a sleep.

"It's awfully nice!" she murmured vaguely.

Aunt Cissie began to bargain for the candlestick: which was a low, thick stem of copper, rising from a double bowl. With patient aloofness the man attended to her, without ever looking at Yvette, who leaned against the doorway and watched in a muse.

"How is your wife?" she asked him suddenly, when Aunt Cissie had gone indoors to show the candlestick to the rector, and ask him if he thought it was worth it.

The man looked fully at Yvette, and a scarcely discernible smile curled his lips. His eyes did not smile: the insinuation in them only hardened to a glare.

"She's all right. When are you coming that way again?" he murmured, in a low, caressive, intimate voice.

"Oh, I don't know," said Yvette vaguely.

"You come Fridays, when I'm there," he said. Yvette gazed over his shoulder as if she had not heard him. Aunt Cissie returned, with the candlestick and the money to pay for it. Yvette turned nonchalant away, trilling one of her broken tunes, abandoning the whole affair with a certain rudeness.

Nevertheless, hiding this time at the landing window, she stood to watch the man go. What she wanted to know, was whether he really had any power over her. She did not intend him to see her this time.

She saw him go down to the gate, with his brooms and pans, and out to the cart. He carefully stowed away his pans and his brooms, and fixed down the tarpaulin over the cart. Then with a slow, effortless spring of his flexible loins, he was on the cart again, and touching the horse with the reins. The roan horse was away at

once, the cart-wheels grinding uphill, and soon the man was gone, without looking round. Gone like a dream which was only a dream, yet which she could not shake off.

"No, he hasn't any power over me!" she said to herself: rather disappointed really, because she wanted somebody, or something to have power over her.⁷⁹

"HOW DO YOU RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER PUBLICLY?" (26 APRIL 2005)

Is there an unspoken code of conduct between you and your partner for public relations purposes? A wealth of body language, carefully coded messages which pass between you like chemicals absorbed through relational osmosis? Perhaps you have agreed that there are certain things you will or will not say or do in the presence of others, and it takes but a meaningful glance, shared, to recall that agreement.

Have you ever found yourself bristling in public over something your husband said to you, or some behavior your wife exhibited that at home would either be accepted with courtesy and respect, or dealt with swiftly and unselfconsciously? Has your partner ever totally shocked you by bandying sharp retorts in the presence of others for no better reason than sheer perverse self will?

At home, I'm perfectly content to allow my husband a great deal of latitude in how he chooses to assert his dominance. Well, actually it has nothing at all to do with my allowing or not; it's more in how I react. I respond positively when his hormones overflow, and he reaches out

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either physically or metaphorically to exercise his will. A well chosen turn of phrase can turn my knees to jelly and send tremors through the sub strata of self in a heartbeat. Privately. That same tone of voice or pointed suggestion in public can feel like fighting words to me. I often wonder why I find certain aspects of masculine dominance highly appealing privately, whilst those same characteristics can rankle in the presence of others.

Not long ago, we had dinner with several other couples at a favorite restaurant. The waiter moved efficiently around the table taking drink and appetizer orders, the responses ranging from Margueritas with nachos, to Martinis with marinated asparagus. Stopping half way round the table the waiter enquired what I'd be having. I was mildly surprised when my husband spoke for me saying, "Ameribrit doesn't drink spirits. She'll have a White Wine Spritzer." Immediately, all eyes were upon us, the crimson in my cheeks undoubtedly looking neon bright. Embarrassed though I was, I simply smiled, reached for my darling's hand and agreed, "That's true. I always pay too high a price when I drink spirits." My response was one of those coded messages which only the two of us could decipher.

The awkward moment passed, further orders were taken, and the meal was lovely. Had we been alone that evening, I would have given over to the deep seated gut reaction of fierce pleasure my husband's pronouncement caused. In mixed company, I did everything in my power to sublimate the urge to playfully say,

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"Yes Sir." I have a history of being sick if I drink hard liquor. It takes but a few sips, and my body rebels, so we've agreed that it's in my best interest to avoid strong drink. The high price I pay is not only the physical illness I might suffer. More significantly, it's the caning I'll receive the next day for being foolish about my health. Why do I allow him to punish me? Why, I've asked him to do so. It's our private, mutually enjoyable ritual on those rare occasions when I choose to live large.

So, why did I feel so deeply ashamed of my reaction to my husband taking me in hand in front of God, the neighbors and various and sundry wait staff? The dynamics of our relationship seem, to me, as private as sexual behavior. I feel no shame in what we share physically, behind closed doors, but I don't want anyone peeking in the widow. Perhaps I feel that his making his primacy in our relationship clear to others, they are being given a glimpse of something I feel is too personal to share.

Many people who know us well have witnessed the subtle interplay between my husband and me, and one brave girlfriend actually asked a few pointed questions. Carefully wording my reply, I basically told her that I followed his lead because I like where he's going. True. I do. I like where he's been, where he's headed, and particularly his vehicle for getting himself to and fro. That heady aura of dominance which women like me seem to sense. He seems to walk in a rarified atmosphere, one which is too rich and sharp for the average man. I feel it, I

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smell, it drives me wild. So my friend got the edited version of what transpires between us. Those of you here can probably articulate, more clearly than I, the whats and wherefores. The rest of the world just doesn't need to know.

Nearly always, my husband politely requests, cordially invites, subtly urges. When the tides of primal manhood course through his veins, he steps close, right into my personal In Zone. Standing in his manly, commanding presence with my head tilted back to see his Nordic blue eyes, I'm barely in control of my deeply female response. Others see that, and it can be unsettling to me. I feel the exchange between us like an elemental power, electrifying, exciting, intoxicating. Sometimes, I wish there was an OFF switch I could throw, dashing out what seems like blinding natural light in a world bathed in the harshness of artificiality.

We've developed a shorthand of sorts, but there are still times in public when I feel the urge, or give in to the desire to push at the boundaries; test the limits. He's unyielding. I can push, but the reassurance of his loving presence remains steadfast. Am I the only one who doesn't want the outside world to see this exchange of power? I'd like an official code of public conduct. You can put that in caps. Of course, when I told him so, he merely smiled.⁸⁰

A watery sun is rising over the hills, a greenish mist gathering itself for early morning dispersal. My eyes close once more as sleep attempts to reclaim me. Creaking slightly under his weight, the bedsprings give as he sits beside me. Leaning close he whispers, "Darling," into the layers of my shaggy hair so in need of a good styling. My indistinct reply is muffled in the bedclothes as I snuggle close.

Reading now from the paper he's brought with him to the bedroom, his voice is a pleasant rumble resonating through the wall of his chest, tickling my neck where it rests against him. I am not a morning person, while my Brit most definitively is. Yawning hugely, I listen to the day's headlines with one ear, whilst the major portion of my wandering attention is still captured by the remnants of some foggy dream. One large hand smooths the hair from my brow as he continues with current events.

If I were a cat I'd be purring, pressed against his warmth, lulled by the reverberation of his deep bass voice. Cat or not, I do my best to purr, indicating that he should not, under any circumstances, stop caressing me so pleasantly. Relating a bit of local news which he knows I will find provocative, he laughs heartily as his drowsing kitten unsheathes her claws. In no time we are having a stimulating debate, the opinions as heated as the steaming mug of coffee he now hands over.

This man knows me well. I've asked him to help me rise earlier in the mornings so I don't feel pressured and stressed as I start my day.

**"TAKEN IN HAND BY TENDERNESS" [27
APRIL 2005]**

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I've no trouble with meeting deadlines, but every difficulty in the world in getting myself going with anything near to approaching the enthusiasm with which my husband greets each dawn. He knows this, and in his love for me, has found the perfect solution to my dilemma. He entices me into wakefulness artfully, coffee his backup secret weapon, often succeeding where mere sensational news bites might fail.

Seeing that not only am I awake, but that I am ready to tackle the world and conquer evil for one more day, he kisses me soundly, returning to his office where his own day has already begun. Draining the last drop of coffee that he has so thoughtfully brewed just for me, I am once again thankful for this man who means more to me with every passing day.

This morning he has taken me in hand so sweetly, so gently and deftly that it has felt like little more than the most tender embrace. His dominance has manifested as the hand at the back of my neck, cradling, shielding, loving, nurturing. As I forge a path through my own busy day, I'm already thinking of ways to make him feel loved.⁸¹

"FIND YOUR VOICE AND SPEAK" (1 MAY 2005)

Far from the bark of command or the shrill whine of nagging, the voice of genuine communication provides understanding, validation; the sense of being heard, appreciated, lifted out of the mire of self centeredness and onto the higher

ground of self acceptance within a healthy partnership. Acceptance, both of self and one's partner, energizes and empowers that voice, while fear of sharing the truth can cause one to be far too myopic for accurate self appraisal.

For myself, I think fear of any kind produces pain, which then has a tendency to eclipse all else. In the grip of fear induced discomfort, I fail to see my partner's needs, too caught up in the effort to ease my pain to consider or fulfill his desires. Only through rigorous self analysis have I discovered what I want, what moves and motivates me. This knowledge is quite freeing in itself, yet the real test comes in trusting another human being enough to share and bare all; enough that I might be open, too, to the variations of sexual and emotional hunger which stimulate him.

Oh, believe me, in the past I have whined big time. I've cried in frustration, in anger, in the misguided belief that my raging would somehow convey more than the current of pain upon which it bobs and blows. I have huffed and puffed, and like even the third little piggy knew to do, my man has fortified well against the storm of my outrage. I have blustered madly only to create a tempest of ill will between us. He can't hear my words or meaning over the railing of accusation and despair. In other words, he can't hear me speak over the shouting.

I've found the climate in our home has progressively improved from early days; the marital storms now few and far between. Being taken in

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hand has changed the atmosphere considerably, my reactions tempered by a growing respect and subsequent desire to please my man. In our particular case, the dominance my husband naturally demonstrates, has been an unspoken reality rather than a diagnosed and detailed plan for living. Having earned my trust over time, his steadfast love allows me the freedom to express the need for definition; if only for the sake of identification, both with others of a similar inclination, and within our own pleasantly kinky environment.

Reading the many insightful, honest, thought provoking posts on this site has given me a sense of place in society; the reassurance that I'm not alone in my desires. It appears my passion, that innate need of mine to be persuaded, sometimes forcefully, to do what I secretly want to do anyway, is not uncommon. Strong, dominant men of sterling character do exist, as do strong, vibrant, intelligent women aching to submit to them. This site, with its healthy dose of humor and joy, is like a beacon shining through the darkness of ignorance and misunderstanding.

Being married to a naturally authoritative, yet inherently intuitive, caring man, I've been fortunate to find my voice. His strength of character seems to have called forth my own, and together we're thriving in an atmosphere of trust, respect, and exciting prospects for the future. Being able to articulate the deepest desires and darkest fantasies of my heart with someone who treasures and appreciates how I'm wired is amazing. Reading on this site reinforces my self acceptance and gives

me new ways to see myself, my husband and our marriage. I'm grateful to have joined the chorus.⁸²

"WEDDED BLISS" (2 MAY 2005)

Recently, my husband and I were in rather heated disagreement over some bit of trivia or other. Not happy with the conversation, I excused myself to find some busywork as distraction. In only minutes, my husband came to me, wrapped his burly arms around me, and asked in a sweet, gravelly voice, "What's the matter with us? Why do we argue over nothing?" Well, that's all I needed to hear, the love in his voice and his gesture, and I found myself apologizing for being unpleasant. His apology followed with complete sincerity, and we were restored to harmony once more.

In the days before I admitted how much I enjoy the masculine feminine power dynamic we experience, I felt such overwhelming frustration, which often led to hostility. That aggressiveness has left me, and both my husband and I communicate much more amicably, even when in disagreement with one another.

As two intelligent human beings, we're bound to have differing opinions, but it feels like a gift to have finally found the key to expressing those differences respectfully to one another. I think we're both much more eager to please each other than we've ever been before.⁸³

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"BEING TAKEN IN HAND WAS REALLY RATHER SUPER" (3 MAY 2005)

I got taken in hand quite decisively yesterday. My husband and I had had words in the morning about something, and being in a really bad mood I grabbed my handbag and headed out the door. "Where are you going?" he asked me. "I'm going round the shops, I won't be long," I replied briefly (the local shops are about a ten-minute walk from us).

However, it was such a lovely day outside, and I was feeling so disgruntled that I decided the hell with it, I would go somewhere more interesting than the local shops and get away from everybody for a while. So I went to Hampton Court. It was a lovely day; the gardens were a riot of brilliant flowers, fountains sparkled in the sunshine, and I soothed my soul drinking in all the beauty. I had lunch in the restaurant, and wandered round the Tudor part of the palace (I never bother with the modern part) and did all the gift shops.

At the back of my mind though was the thought of the reaction I was likely to get when I returned home after saying I was "just going round the shops". I wondered if perhaps it mightn't be better to just run away to sea or something and not go home at all. But then I thought the children might miss me, so I went.

Arriving home after an absence of four and a half hours, I was met by an absolutely furious husband. Nevertheless, in spite of being extremely

angry, he was keeping it under control.

"Where have you been?" he asked

"Hampton Court," I said

"Why?" he asked.

"Because I like Hampton Court," I replied. (This is true, but I knew perfectly well that wasn't what his question meant). I had given the children some things from the gift shops, and while they were happily occupied with those, he took me to the workshop and administered a short but vigorous and extremely painful spanking. He used the dreaded steel ruler, which is a good thing to use if you are pressed for time, it can inflict excruciating pain even through denim, if you haven't time to disrobe.

While he spanked me we discussed my behaviour, and the fact that I was never, ever, going to do that again, and yes, I was really, really sorry, and ow, that really really hurts. "If you think this hurts," he said grimly, "Just wait until the children are in bed."

So I had several hours to contemplate that happy thought, with the familiar rising tide of tension and apprehension and excitement, overlaid by the slightly spooky feeling *Oh god, this is real isn't it? He's really angry with me; he's really going to punish me this time!*

And when the time came I realised that he had spoken correctly, the earlier session was nothing like as painful.

"This hurts me more than it does you, you know," he said as he applied the paddle with what seemed to me somewhat excessive vigour.

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"No, it bloody well doesn't!" I replied with conviction.

But he contained his anger, he brought me back under control, he made me feel suitably contrite, and he avoided a major row. And I suppose that was really rather super.⁸⁴

"COULD YOU BE A SLAVE, OWNED, PROPERTYP?" (8 MAY 2005)

Many with a taste for male-led relationships are drawn to the idea of property, ownership, possession. It brings to mind the idea of a man in total control, commanding obedience and having the right to do what he wants with his property provided he doesn't annoy the neighbours. It conjures up images of a woman having no choice, no veto power, and no way out. To some of those who want real control and no safety net, it sounds satisfyingly absolute.

Since *Taken In Hand* is about male-led relationships and real control on the part of the man rather than just play control, it is not surprising that some *Taken In Hand* folk consider themselves to be in TPE or "absolute power" relationships. Nor should it be surprising that some *Taken In Hand* folk consider themselves to be in a "master-slave" relationship.

And yet for many, the idea of being a slave is completely abhorrent. We imagine real slaves being mistreated and used by wicked exploiters. Or we imagine an arrogant, odious "master" sitting back and expecting to be waited on hand and foot, and a down-trodden passive doormat woman being treated ap-

pallingly and suffering in silence. Or we imagine leather-clad BDSM types role-playing a negotiated scene before returning to "vanilla mode" equality. It need be none of these things.

Take the idea of literal slavery. Despite what some websites say, we (and indeed they) are not really talking about literal slavery, since the real thing is fundamentally non-consensual and not something real slaves passionately want. If you really want with all your heart not to have a choice or a way out, the relationship is, at its core, consensual. It is *consensual* non-consent, not the same sort of non-consent as when someone kidnaps a person having no desire to be a slave, and forces him into slavery. (Similarly, the "rape" I spoke of in my article "When rape is a gift" is not *really* non-consensual.)

Nor does being owned imply much about the owner. Different men have different preferences, limits, predilections, and objectives, and they are not all thoroughly loathsome. Obviously, it wouldn't do to be owned by someone incompatible, so caution and common sense is needed when you seek to be in such a relationship. Not just any man will do.

One thing that grates with some *Taken In Hand* folk is the idea that being a slave is the ultimate kind of servant. Not all submissive women have the service kink. And not all *Taken In Hand* women think of themselves as submissive either. The trouble is that many think that submissiveness means passivity, docility, having a "beta" personality, be-

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ing mindlessly obedient or a people-pleaser. But as Jon Jacobs has written:

Submissive women run the gamut in aggressiveness from almost completely passive to super-aggressive. They can range from mildly resistant and disobedient, especially in the early period of a relationship, to super-resistant. What all submissive women share has nothing to do with levels of resistance or aggressiveness: it is the simple and profound desire to be controlled, protected, and contained—in a word, dominated.

Some say that being a slave is defined by “the degree of submission.” This might be a reasonable idea, but it is often taken to imply a scale of *obedience* such that being prepared to commit suicide or murder on command is deemed the mark of someone worthy of the name “slave”, whereas those who are not amoral or immoral are deemed not to make the grade.

I recently had a conversation with a D/s woman who clearly liked the idea of thinking of herself as her boyfriend's slave but who had been told that to be a slave means total obedience no matter what. If you are property, she had been told, your owner has the right to dispose of you as he wishes, including lending you out to other men, giving you away, selling you, and indeed killing you or having you kill your child. Realising that she could not in good conscience obey such commands, the woman sadly concluded that she could not be a slave.

Such statements are indeed consistent with the idea that if you own

something, you have the right to dispose of it as you wish, provided that whatever you do with it doesn't frighten the horses. But what these statements seem to ignore is the fact that some uses of your property are better than other uses, and not everything you have a right to do is *right*. Some things you could do with your property would be morally wrong.

If you dislike this talk of morality perhaps you can at least agree with the following statement: not all men would want to lend their woman to other men, kill her, or have her commit murder. Some men would have a strong preference not to do these things. Some men would find the idea of those things quite appalling. If you are going to be a man's property, you had better make jolly sure you and he are compatible and have broadly the same values, limits, predilections and objectives.

The idea that *you must obey no matter what or you can't be a slave* puts all the responsibility for control on the woman and leads some men to develop the unrealistic expectation of zero resistance and complete obedience no matter what they ask of the woman. But being a slave doesn't give a woman super-human powers of unquestioning obedience any more than it makes her subhuman. Anyone who wants a slave has to be prepared to assert his authority actively if necessary. When a man tells a woman that obedience is the *sine qua non* condition of a relationship with him, the chances are, he has unrealistic expectations and will deny his own responsibility of control in the relationship. Such men

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tend to accuse the woman of being dominant, controlling, a shrew, unwomanly, not submissive or not a slave. Such accusations can be terribly wounding to the woman and may be highly destructive.

This view of the “slave” as being someone who obeys her owner without demur is common but it is not the only possible view. If you like the idea of being a “slave” or “property” but could not violate your deepest moral values in the name of obedience, there is another perfectly reasonable view you could take, as I shall explain.

Some take the view that “property does what it's told” but wherever did that idea come from? Property doesn't necessarily submit, serve or obey, does it? Well the dog I had as a child never did anyway! I spent vast amounts of time trying to train her to sit on the floor when told to, and not to move until permitted to, without success. I didn't even attempt to get her to fetch my slippers, retrieve a ball or otherwise serve obligingly like other dogs do. It just wasn't going to happen! No doubt an expert dog trainer would have done better, but I was unable to command her obedience.

Whether property does these things or not depends to a large extent on its owner. If the owner has a commanding presence and knows how to handle his property, he may thereby get the property to obey. But if the owner is mean or doesn't know how to control his property, the property is unlikely to obey, might rebel, and might even run away to find a better owner.

In this more realistic view of an ownership or master-slave relationship, the responsibility for obedience is not all on the woman: it recognizes that the man needs to be able to handle the woman and command her obedience (to make the woman *want* to obey or feel compelled to obey) if he is to expect obedience.

This view is in some ways more literal than the view that says that to be owned or a slave, you have to obey without question. It is a fact that historically, slaves did not always obey their masters, Biblical exhortations to do so notwithstanding. Read Frederick Douglass!

Moreover, in the real world of slavery, a slave might rather die trying to escape than commit murder. That you are not a person without moral values does not prohibit you from being a slave or owned in some sense. As a human being, you are a moral agent in your own right, and you remain responsible for your actions, slave or not.

If you are drawn to the idea of being a slave (or property or owned) but think you do not meet the criteria, you might want to change the criteria you have in mind rather than sadly abandoning your heart's desire.

Or if what draws you is the absoluteness of the idea—the no control, no choice, no safety net and no way out—you might enjoy discovering (by reading *Taken In Hand*) that not all who consider themselves to be in an absolute, “no safety net” relationship feel any need to call themselves a “slave”. Some don't even claim to be submissive.⁸⁵

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"CONSENT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD" (13 MAY 2005)

I went to visit a vanilla friend of mine the other day and she proceeded to tell me all about how controlling her boyfriend was. He is a friend also of Master and me. My friend said her b-friend had lots of rules like that she had to be home when arrived home from work, that he wanted the house clean and dinner ready also. He has a bedtime for them and he limits her time on the computer, etc.. etc..

She says that he doesn't get violent or anything when these things are not met but that he scolds her a little and stresses his rules. She also said that he is a very loving person and he tries his best to meet her needs. But she is finding the control thing to be abusive.

As she is telling me this I could not help to think about how much consent really means. What she finds abusive, others seek out. She has no idea as to how structured my daily life is. She doesn't know that I'm slave or that my master has lots of "rules" for me also. But I consent to this; I live this happily. For my vanilla friend however, it is emotional abuse and domineering behaviour, because she doesn't consent to such things.

This got me thinking about the importance of consent. Feel free to comment.⁸⁶

"WHEN IS IMPLICIT CONSENT ENOUGH?" (16 MAY 2005)

There are at least four basic ways to control a woman.

One way is to ignore the woman—denying her needed companionship and love—making her desperate. This is emotional and psychological management.

In the extreme—perhaps even committing adultery—she can be declared an unfit mother for her children or suffer equivalent degradation.

A variation of the above is telling the woman she is crazy. Women have a basic and compelling need to know that they are normal—whatever that may mean to society at the moment.

Although extremely effective as a control mechanism, to deny a healthy woman the sense that she is sane and rational is the ultimate mental torture. It is probably the most physically and psychologically debilitating of the methods.

Another way to control a woman is to keep her busy. While children can be one way of doing this, one frequently sees this in business where an ambitious wife is brought into a business or organization in an ancillary position that keeps her too busy to cause trouble in other ways.

In the subsidiary arrangement, she bedevils the hired help and keeps track of things, but she is otherwise denied any real decision-making power.

A better way to control a woman is to take her in hand. Although decried by detractors as "violence" against a woman's will, it is the most honest of the four methods. It is emotionally and physically healthier

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for her in that it is not psychologically manipulative.

It is pressure releasing rather than tension building. Consequently, it is actually the most liberating of experiences for women in that it facilitates the cleansing power of tears as she is being held in secure arms.

As a cathartic experience, it effectively purges guilt and other emotional baggage. It that it clears the mind rather than clutters it, taking a woman in hand is the antithesis of psychological manipulation.

Traditional marriage implies consent for a woman to be taken in hand. Where political correctness has gotten the cart before the donkey is in demanding that consent for a taken in hand relationship be explicit.

Actually it should be the other way around. A woman should have to show —especially through her behavior—why she should not be taken in hand on occasion.

Marriage is not a parlor game. Nor is it a prolonged college date-night with paperwork and rings. Instead, marriage is an arrangement that is older than the current institutions and philosophies that try to define it as an “alternative” lifestyle.

Within marriage, women have a right to expect to be loved and treated as something other than a girlfriend on an extended visit. At the same time, within that stable arrangement comes the implicit consent to be taken in hand.⁸⁷

“THE PROPER CARE AND FEEDING OF HUSBANDS: A BOOK REVIEW” (16 MAY 2005)

The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands, by Laura Schlessinger is a book that I highly recommend for any woman interested in a Taken In Hand relationship. In fact, I would encourage any woman who feels as if her marriage has lost its spark, or who is unhappy in her marriage, to read and take Laura Schlessinger’s advice to heart. She can be abrasive and blunt, and her conservative political and social positions have a tendency to alienate more liberal readers, but the counsel she offers in this book transcends conservative, liberal, or religious agendas. It is just good common sense.

Laura Schlessinger’s premise is straightforward: Men are simple creatures who long for the admiration, respect and love of a good woman. Men were raised by women and still need to be deeply connected to a woman. According to Dr Laura, women have a great deal of unused, or misused, power in their relationships with men. If a woman is careful to meet her husband’s basic needs for admiration, respect, frequent sex, and good food, he will repay her in spades. Laura Schlessinger emphasizes that what seems to be a sacrifice for the woman at the beginning, is in fact a great gift she gives herself. A man who is properly cared for by his woman, will do anything for her—even, as Dr Laura likes to say “swim through shark infested waters” to please her.

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When Laura Schlessinger says that men are “simple,” she doesn’t mean they are stupid or limited. In fact, she decries the liberal, feminist agenda that seems dead set on insulting men. She feels that young women have been raised in a culture that is hostile to men, and by internalizing this message, they have become selfish and have a sense of entitlement that is out of proportion. She berates women for feeling as if the man should meet the *woman's* needs without her making an equal effort to meet his. She points to women who are so busy with outside careers, volunteering, hobbies and children, that they neglect the one who should be number one in her life. Dr Laura is a working woman, and does not condemn women for working, but she does insist that women *must* put their husbands above their work, and even above their children.

Dr Laura does not imply that men are superior to women, nor does she insist that the man should be the “head of the household.” However, I found that by applying the principles in her book to my “equal” marriage, I empowered my husband to find and embrace his natural dominance. Since most women on this site are looking for that result, I always recommend putting Dr Laura’s principles into practice if one’s husband seems to reluctant to take her in hand.

The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands is not about violence toward women or about abuse of any kind. Dr Laura does not advocate tolerating physical abuse or infidelity. It is a book about taking responsibility,

acting like a sexy, respectful, adoring wife, and making your man happy. As she poignantly points out, “A good man is hard to find, not to keep.” In Proverbs in the Old Testament it says, “A wise woman builds up her house, but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands.” Dr Laura’s book is a terrific, readable guide to “building up your house.”⁸⁸

“WHAT WOMEN WANT” (18 MAY 2005)

Women want a man who can face reality—be honest and truthful with them when it counts. Flattery is nice. Being told they are pretty is expected. But when things really matter, women want a man able to size up a situation and act appropriately. Unless they have an agenda, women loathe weakness and indecisiveness over time.

Women want a man who leads by example—a man who is not so much controlling as in control, who sets a pace for change. He is committed to the relationship and makes the sacrifices necessary for it to succeed—even in doing little things.

While no longer necessary in today’s disposable society, decades ago, I pre-washed diapers in the toilet, washed and rinsed them clean, and hung them on an outdoor clothesline. One of the neighbors thought it funny—seeing a man hanging out diapers in the sun to dry—and wished me a happy Mother’s Day. After all, that was women’s work. Not surprisingly, my wife was more appreciative.

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Women want a man with whom they can share a destiny—makes them feel secure—before someone else steals their dream. My wife says that she cannot imagine being married to anyone else but me. She says that, although I have held her accountable when she might have wished at the time, I have also helped her to become more than she might have otherwise become.

The life of a single, she has said, would have made her bitter. A man unable to handle her would have sent her into the arms of another. Each of the alternatives would have stolen something from her that she needed to make her life more complete.

While women may vary in how they express their expectations, absent some self-serving agenda, that which they desire in a man will incorporate the above elements.⁸⁹

“RESPECT AND RESPONSIBILITY” (19 MAY 2005)

In Dr Pat Allen's* view of a covenant relationship, the masculine-energy person (usually the man) gives to, protects, and cherishes the feelings of the feminine-energy person (usually the woman); and the woman respects the man, accepts his leadership and gracefully receives what the man gives her.

Some readers might question whether the men considering this relationship would find Pat Allen's idea of the masculine-energy posi-

tion appealing, and some might say that, compared to the alternative of reducing one's woman to the maternal servitude and solicitousness to which one has become comfortably accustomed by being raised by women up to and past one's majority, it is indeed not an attractive or particularly agreeable position to adopt.

It is, however, the obligation of the maintenance of a man's integrity, a man's self-concept—if that concept involves the realization that masculine *authority* (male supremacy) is premised and legitimized upon male *responsibility* toward his woman.

Of course, the universal human ambition is to enjoy authority without responsibility and to impose that responsibility upon those not given the corresponding authority. Many women have been raised to accept this arrangement with respect to their husbands, whatever the responsibilities imposed upon the wife. But many another woman has now come to hate and reject this inequitable and inappropriate state of affairs—hence the feminist variety of the revolution which contributes to the further declension of societal order and survival.

If, as a masculine man believes, the good order of society depends, inescapably, upon the judicious, intelligent, forthrightly truthful use of power (historically and properly a masculine prerogative, burden, and authority), then the reactionary disempowerment of women toward eliminating the societally destructive effects of radical egalitarian feminism involves the general resump-

* **Reference:** Dr Patricia Allen: *Getting to “I Do”*.

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tion of masculine *responsibility* and *equity* (in appropriate form) toward women and wives.

This means that the complementarity of which Pat Allen writes and speaks is realized, in terms of responsibility and authority, in the relief of wives from responsibility—for anything—if men are to equitably claim authority and thus to be truly worthy of respect. No cooking, no cleaning, no having to earn money, other than that which the wife merely *feels* like doing of these routine familial activities, so that she might genuinely feel cherished rather than enserved.

In classical terms—men, who *are* men and worthy of respect, are warriors who go out and take slaves brought back for their women to put to work at domestic activities. In more modern times, of course, servants are paid to perform these activities to which women, wives, and lesser males are otherwise put.

But few men are materially capable of sustaining this arrangement, so wives must work and/or act as the missing servants—and are correspondingly resentful and at least casually contemptuous of husbands who rightfully lose their wives' respect and grant of authority. The natural complementarity of an aristocratic existence dissolves under the pressures of the common man's penury.

And so Pat Allen's complementary covenant relationships for heterosexuals, fully realized in fact or in spirit, have little appeal or practicability for any but a few unusual men. My own circumstance is one where my wife and I do not want

the presence or expense of servants in our home, so there is much servants' work to be done by ourselves, inside and outside. In assuming *authority* in our family, I am *responsible* for the doing of *all* such work, and I personally do at least two-thirds of it as a matter of obligation toward the doing of the whole, my wife doing the remainder merely as she pleases.⁹⁰

"ARE YOU THE CONAN THE BARBARIAN TYPE?" (19 MAY 2005)

M. wrote:

Any man who stumbles too deep into a Conan the Barbarian fantasy of taking his woman in hand based on "implicit consent" runs a distinct risk of going to jail.

Yes, that's true; but for those of us who are looking for a Conan to love, it's also very sad. (And sad for the Conans of the world, of course.) There's no denying that we're currently in a culture that's at war with the very idea of male domination of women, and that makes things more difficult for dominant men and the women who love them. But even though the current climate of feminist political correctness tends to rob us of some romance, there's no reason it should be allowed to make romance utterly impossible.

A man should not engage in behavior that's likely to put him in jail, because putting himself in such a vulnerable and disempowered position is the very opposite of dominance. But for many of us, the requirement for explicit verbal consent

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is like a wet sponge that ruins the whole experience of being dominated; it makes it feel less serious and less real, makes it seem like something we could put a stop to any time we wanted. And for many women, what they want is precisely to feel that they have no control over it, that the man is in complete control at all times.

So, even despite the consent requirement, there needs to be creative ways for the man to take charge of the process, right from the beginning, without waiting for any signals from the woman. But that should be done nonverbally; a bit of dominant behavior conveys a dominant attitude better than any words can. (And her conscious mind might be inclined to disagree with a verbal explanation of dominance; but a bit of dominant behavior can bypass all the intellectualization and summon up her physical and emotional submissive tendencies. For many or most women, it's much easier and more pleasant to submit to a man's dominant behavior than it is to discuss the issue; the latter can be embarrassing and lead to resistance.)

He can probe the woman's submissive tendencies with harmless dominance moves that put him in control, but which could not reasonably be interpreted as any sort of assault. He can hold her tight and pin her arms behind her back, while he whispers teasingly, "I just might not let you go, what do you think about that...?" Or if there's some minor dispute to settle (like, what movie to see), he can playfully tell her that they'll arm wrestle, and whoever wins gets to make the deci-

sions. Or he could even deliver a light, playful whack (one only) on her rump, while she's standing up fully clothed. (Especially if it's in response to some teasing on her part, and he can tell her she was "naughty.") When they're walking together, he can take her firmly by the wrist and lead her. Even slow dancing can be a way to emphasize that he's the one who leads, and she's the one who follows. I once had a boyfriend who would get up close to me, look down at me with a very piercing look in his eyes—but also loving and a bit playful—and just let out a low growl. It was a little warning to me that there was a wild beast in him; and I thought it was one of the sexiest things.

But not all women (even not all submissive women) will respond positively to the same dominance tactics, so it's important to be persistent by trying different things. Especially because some women who have extreme submissive tendencies exhibit that through resistance and denial. (Perverse, I know; but she wants to know that he's strong enough and dominant enough to push through her resistance and overwhelm her.) But if she doesn't seem to respond positively to any of it, or if she complains (in a non-teasing manner) that he's "too bossy," then she's probably not the right woman.

If she does seem like she enjoys being dominated, then that can eventually be discussed explicitly. But here again, I think it's much better if the man takes the initiative. Don't spring it too quickly; let her experience his dominant behavior first. But

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if she does start to make teasing remarks like "yes, master" or joke about how bossy he is sometimes, then it's probably a good time to talk about it. But I think there are two very bad ways a man could choose to talk about it. One is to be very clinical and explicit, and the other is to seem too needy.

The former mistake would be something like, "You may not be aware of it, but some men, such as myself, prefer to be the dominant partner in a marriage or romantic relationship, and some women prefer...blah, blah, yada, yada." Please. Don't put the poor woman to sleep with your detailed oration. The second error would be something like: "Gosh, I really like you a lot and would like our relationship to grow more intimate; but as it happens I sometimes enjoy being dominant, and I was hoping maybe that you might enjoy being submissive, at least sometimes, or perhaps at least you might be willing to consider trying it out..." Sorry, but that's not dominance, that's whimpering and groveling.

Much better to first establish that she reacts positively to his dominance; even if that first requires overcoming some resistance on her part. (No, I don't mean forcing a spanking on her when she's yelling at him to stop. Nor do I mean being bossy all the time. I mean trying out a variety of dominant *romantic* behaviors and seeing what elicits a receptive response.) Then when her submissive inclinations have been established (or even if it's not, but he still thinks she might have potential), it's time to put that into words.

Preferably this should be done in privacy, and at a physically intimate moment. But it's better not to phrase it as a question (which can seem kind of wimpy). Instead, he can state it as a fact that he has observed about her, or an inclination that he has somehow guessed she has. Such as, "You know, I do get bossy and pushy with you sometimes. But I also know that some women really like having a man in charge, and I'm guessing that you're one of those women." Or, "Yeah, I guess I just have this macho "alpha male" streak in me. But it seems to me like you're the kind of woman who can appreciate a man who knows how to take charge." Maybe even add: "I find it very feminine the way you respond to me; and a woman who is truly feminine is fascinating to me."

It's best for him to look her straight in the eyes when he delivers this sort of pronouncement on her submissive tendencies; preferably with a penetrating gaze of adoration. (But I would avoid using the word "submissive" because it's just too loaded with diverse connotations and excess baggage, and she might not want to see herself that way.) If she just blushes or gets coy and doesn't want to talk about it, then just leave it for the time being; and maybe raise it again later. But that kind of behavior would seem to indicate compatibility with a dominant man. If she argues with you about it, or outright denies it, or wants to go into lengthy debate about exactly what you mean, then that's not as promising. (But, again, sometimes very submissive women will put up

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precisely that sort of resistance at first.)

Or maybe she'll want to talk about it right then and there, so he should be prepared for that, too. Another approach would be for him to tell her that he's interested in what sort of romances she finds exciting; or even encourage her to read him some of her favorite erotic passages from romance novels. (If she reads them.) Or he could encourage her to express her romantic fantasies through poetry or writing short descriptions of imaginary encounters that she (or "some women") might enjoy. It can be easier for a woman to express her interests indirectly that way, than by sitting down and saying "here is what really turns me on..."

But I would advise against the man laying all his cards out on the table right away; nor should he demand that she do that; and certainly don't pull out one of those silly bdsm "checklists" and/or make her list all the things she would enjoy and all the things she would object to. Some "dominant" men seem to underestimate the feminine tendency towards modesty, perhaps because they don't really grasp how fragile and vulnerable a woman can feel with regard to the whole dominance/submission theme. (Which is one reason the whole "explicit verbal consent" thing is just a pain and bother.) Women enjoy having some mystery and secrecy to romance, they enjoy having things understood but not named aloud. I also think most women like the feeling that they're not completely exposed, but rather hidden behind a veil of

sorts—even if they're stark naked. The mistake that men seem to make is in wanting to just pull the veil off right away; they don't seem to realize that will diminish the erotic aspect for both of them.

It's still the man's job to continue exploring the unknown terrain of her emotional responses, by seeing how she responds to his dominant moves. If he tries to shortcut that by demanding that she describe her submissive tendencies fully, or hand him a detailed report of her "kinks" and inclinations, then that can seem very cold and even insulting. It indicates he's either too lazy to do the work, or not interested enough in her to think that she's worth the effort. (And a woman will not want to give herself to a man who does not seem to adore her and value her sufficiently.) Instead, it should be a journey of discovery for both of them, but one in which he is clearly the captain. And when, at some point, that journey is accompanied by explicit verbal discussions of consent, it will hopefully not detract too much from the thrill of the voyage which was already underway.

So—yes, I do want a Conan. But I want a Conan with heart and brains—a strong man who has a deep emotional capacity, as well as the insight and intuitive capacity that it takes to figure out what makes his woman tick. That's what "implicit consent" implies. Because only then will he really be capable of exerting his dominance effectively, leading her and even pushing to new depths of romantic experience. And if he is actually capable of doing that, then the pesky need for

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explicit verbal consent becomes less a weighty issue of central concern, and more like a small, decorative footnote.⁹¹

"TAKEN IN HAND HAS CHANGED OUR MARRIAGE" (21 MAY 2005)

For us, Taken In Hand was a last ditch effort to save our marriage. During the last couple of years, my husband and I had been having a lot of difficulty being on the same page while dealing with life's stresses. Our communication was going down hill quickly and we were both feeling more and more distant from each other. After 25 years, we saw our relationship on the verge of being in real trouble and we were so frustrated because we love each other so much. When we were at odds, he would get mad and retreat and I would become more hurt, resentful and desperate. We would have terrible screaming fights. We tried several times to work really hard at getting along but we would always find ourselves in the same place. Retreat, disrespect, inconsideration and distance were beginning to be the words used to describe our marriage and we both hated it!

Finally, he was away on a trip one night and I had been reading on the Taken In Hand site (we had erotically played with spanking for years). While reading, a light bulb went on and I began to envision how this Taken In Hand idea could be used to improve our relationship. I was up all night thinking about it and planning what I would say to him. When he returned the next day, we lay on

the bed talking and I told him how worried I was about us and I knew he was frustrated too.

I said, "When we are not getting along, we both get so upset—I outwardly and you inwardly. My mind starts wondering and I get more upset and insecure and pretty soon, I am almost emotionally unreachable. You are mad because we are not understanding each other and you isolate yourself from me. This puts me in more of a tailspin. We need to step back and re-evaluate how we are relating to each other and what our individual needs are. I know that I need you to be more strong and firm with me. If we are discussing something and it seems like we are beginning to get defensive with each other, I need you to take the responsibility of controlling the situation. Keep your own temper in check and stay steady the way you can. Reel me in before I get out of hand. I know I would respond to it. I guess what I am saying is that maybe you should take your authority out of the bedroom and make it real in our everyday lives."

We discussed it for a few hours and he was very quiet but his first response was, "I think you might have stumbled on to something here". I printed out some posts from the Taken In Hand site for him. The posts were not theoretical or philosophical but more the practical "this is what works for us" posts. He learned a lot from how other Taken In Hand couples relate and I believe it gave him the courage and insight to establish some boundaries for us and our relationship. Seems like we discussed it for hours during the

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next few days, trying to figure it out and how it could work for us.

Before long, he really seemed to easily fall into a very authoritative role with me. He learned (and is still learning) how to use his masculinity to create an atmosphere which can calm me down and bring a very secure and feminine side of me to the top. He does this with his love, his tone and voice and sometimes, his belt. I responded quickly—almost instantaneously—to this very loving but authoritative side of him.

We say that Taken In Hand has “put us in our places”. His place is to be attentive, loving, protective and dominant. My place is to be considerate, loving, encouraging and submissive. In our places, he is in charge, which is absolutely fine with me. He sets the pace and it completely fulfills me to follow. There is a deep, deep need in me for this. I am a strong woman but deep inside, I love being vulnerable to this man.

Taken In Hand forces us to think about each other more. It requires him to be more involved in me and take more responsibility for our relationship. It forces me to be more respectful and to think before I respond with just my emotions; it has literally changed the way I think about him.

My husband has told me that he feels more like a man in our relationship: he loves being in charge and I love submitting to him. At times, he backs up his authority with physical discipline and we have discovered that this works for us. I seem to need a physical reminder of my responsibilities towards him. A

discipline session can put us back or keep us in our places. The benefits are ongoing and have taken us to a deeper level of trust and intimacy.

As with anything new, we have had bumps trying to figure all this out and how it works best for us. Several times, we have fallen away from our new roles and begun to slip back to our old ways of relating and we have both been miserable. No doubt the dynamics will continue to change as we figure it out for ourselves. However, neither of us would go back to life without it. We are feeling things for each other that we hadn't felt in years. We are definitely more sexually tuned into each other than ever.

It is hard to describe in a few paragraphs how or why this works for us and the changes we have seen in our marriage because of it. I do think a couple would need to be wired for this in order for it to work. For us, the wiring was there and I feel it has saved our marriage.⁹²

“ARE YOU WORTH YOUR WEIGHT IN GOLD?” (22 MAY 2005)

What do you want in a man?

I want a man who wants to spend the rest of his life with me and who will love me unconditionally.

I want a man who will be the leader in our family.

I want a man who is kind, considerate, thoughtful, caring, compassionate, strong, who will not put up with nonsense, a man who will set the limits and enforce them if necessary.

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A man who is not afraid to be himself and is accepting of who I am. A man who supports me in the decisions of my life, and will share his wisdom with me.

A man who will listen to my side of the story before making a decision. A man who is fair yet who will not hesitate to take me in hand if necessary.

My husband has always been a wonderful man. We have been in love since we were teenagers.

Since finding Taken In Hand last year our relationship has become much richer. I have the man that I have always wanted! There are times when we fall into old ways but we bounce back quicker. We aren't perfect but Taken In Hand has been worth its weight in gold and so is my husband.⁹³

"TAKEN IN HAND IS ABOUT MALE LEADERSHIP NOT SPANKING" (25 MAY 2005)

Many think that a Taken In Hand relationship is one in which a husband spans a naughty wife, but actually, Taken In Hand has nothing to do with spanking. Let me give a few reasons why I think this from my own personal experiences.

Mike and I love spanking. We primarily spank for fun, for no reason at all. Sometimes we spank more seriously, for no reason at all, and sometimes we spank for a reason and sometimes my husband takes me in hand but does not spank me at all.

Although for Mike and me spanking is an important part of our Taken In Hand relationship we tried

spanking before Mike started to be the head of the household and take me in hand. At that time we did not even consider that discipline was more than just role play. It did not in my wildest dreams—well, OK, maybe only in my wildest dreams—occur to me that a husband would take his wife in hand. The very idea of a male head of a modern home was not even considered. I was born in the early 1970's in Canada and believe me this was not even entertained as an option. So we tried spanking. It was ridiculous; we got nothing out of it except a few laughs and a sore butt. It had its fun side but it had no profound effect on me or Mike at all.

Knowing something was missing I started looking for more information about spanking and came across information on male-led relationships. It set off fireworks for me. Here were people doing what I had always really wanted, but never considered a possibility. I had always wanted a strong, no-nonsense man with convictions in my relationship. Once Mike took the lead in our relationship and started taking me hand, spanking took on a whole new dimension for us.

Spanking is an important part of our Taken In Hand relationship, and Mike does spank me when he is displeased with me. But that is not what makes us Taken In Hand. What makes us Taken In Hand is the whole dynamic of Mike leading our relationship. It has a lot to do with Mike's attitude about his place in our marriage, and how I react to that. It has a lot to do with how Mike now just knows he is responsible to

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lead us, take care of us. It is his easy, comfortable demeanour and how he never questions who is the leader. He knows I will submit to his will, so there he need not worry about that. Even though we do use spanking, his leadership has nothing to do with spanking.

Now we love to use spanking for fun, he spans me often. Since we changed the dynamic of our relationship this has taken on more meaning, even if we are just fooling around. For us Taken In Hand is about Mike's leadership, and my submission to that leadership. Spanking is a fringe benefit, one that Mike can choose to use however he wants!⁹⁴

"CAN YOU BE IN CHARGE WITHOUT TURNING INTO HER MOTHER?" (26 MAY 2005)

I thought I wanted a "controlling" man. When my naturally dominant husband started to be controlling at my request, I realized I hated it. He used to say, "You say you want to be submissive but you are fighting me every step of the way!" This really hurt me because I really do want to be submissive. But to be told what to do, when to do it, how to do it, etc., was just not cutting it with me. Reminded me way too much of my mother.

It was frustrating me, and him also because he is and has always been dominant, but controlling was not in his make up. BUT, when he is just

himself—dominant and head of our household *without* trying to control every aspect of my life—I became a much happier person.

I do ask his opinion of everything. I normally will not go out to lunch with a friend or anything before checking with him. NOT for permission, but just to make sure he didn't have anything else planned for that same time. He does always come first.

Taken in Hand is a new way of living for us. We have just started our journey using Taken In Hand. I have always had such a huge respect for my husband from the moment I laid eyes on him, but I do like to push the envelope. I am finding by reading here that Taken In Hand men are ALL such loving, caring, nurturing men. They have that wonderful soft side, but they are always in charge too. Does that make sense? I was married for way too long to a wimpy, wussy man and I lost all respect for him very quickly.

My husband now is the most tender, loving, romantic man I have ever met but I know he will not take my crap when I get in my moods. To me, that's what Taken in Hand means. Having that great respect that comes naturally and lovingly, not submitting out of fear to a controlling micromanager.⁹⁵

"GETTING TO 'I DO', BY PATRICIA ALLEN: A BOOK REVIEW" (27 MAY 2005)

Patricia Allen's theory is that every couple must consist of a leader (a masculine-energy person) and a follower (a feminine-energy person).

* "The difference between dominant and controlling," 16 December 2003.

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She does not rule out the possibility that the woman may prefer to be the leader and the man the follower, but there must be one of each. She completely rules out any possibility of an "equal" relationship, because she believes this cannot work.

A woman must, she contends, love herself more than a man if she is a truly "feminine" woman. She must give the man less than he gives her, she must not make herself into a doormat or do things just to please him at the expense of her own happiness. A feminine woman receives rather than gives. Men are givers, women are receivers.

I will go so far as to say that, although, like all self-help books, Pat Allen's *Getting to "I Do"* is pretty silly, nevertheless it does contain some quite sensible advice here and there. My favourite part of the book is chapter 12—"Dealing with the Toad in Every Prince"—where she explains how to cope with the inevitable stage in your relationship where you find out the things about your prospective partner that you don't like. She advises that if you wait for the perfect man you will wait forever. "Don't give up unless he makes you sick or drives you crazy. Nobody is perfect. If he's 51 percent, keep him."

There is, of course, a lot of silliness in the book. There are the trite pieces of advice for how to attract a man, wearing sexy clothes, putting on makeup, smiling a lot, etc. Personally, I always found that the best way to attract a man was not to try at all. My experience has always been that men like women who are interested in something else besides them.

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Likewise, her advice that you should not have sex with a man until he is "committed" (to you, not to an asylum) because otherwise he won't want to marry you, I found dubious. Had this been true, I would never have received any offers of marriage, but I did. And the usual boring advice about how to have a sensuous evening, bathing together, scented candles, soft music, etc—gosh, I don't suppose anyone would ever think of those things on their own! Probably her strangest idea is that a woman with children should cease to love them more than herself after they reach the age of five, a hopelessly impractical suggestion, in my opinion.

She is not entirely inflexible about the male/female thing, and suggests that the relationship can be more flexible once you are married. Still though she adheres to the curious notion that a woman should have to ask the man for permission to express her thoughts, because thoughts are "masculine", and a man must ask permission to express feelings because feelings are "feminine". And the language she suggests that supposedly intimate couples should use when addressing each other would sound excessively formal at the Imperial Court of China.

Although much of it is silly, this book does contain flashes of common sense, and Pat Allen certainly does not see the woman as being without responsibility. She believes that issues like who does what chores are matters to be negotiated. Nowhere does she suggest that a woman is without any responsibility

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for doing anything. As self-help books go,* I conclude, it is not as daft as some.⁹⁶

"NATURAL FLOW" (28 MAY 2005)

There is a natural flow to Taken in Hand relationships. These are not forced issues.

Just as a woman can be unnaturally submissive—doting on a man's every whim—so too can a man be unnaturally dominant in demanding that his every whim be satisfied. Taken in Hand is about the relationship not about the self.

For the man, there are times to take a stand and not budge one inch. At other times, it does not much matter.

Only an absolute fool thinks that he will be in charge of everything all the time. The challenge is to separate the wheat—the things that count—from the rest of the stuff—the stuff that does not matter.

Genuinely putting the woman first is seldom a mistake.

For example, there have been times when I have been quite bossy and *demande*d that my wife purchase new underwear. I have, literally, *taken* her to the store to purchase new bras.

The concerns cannot be superficial—telling a woman what to wear and when to wear it. It must be authentic—from the heart. Whether taking a woman to the store to pur-

chase new knickers or telling her to take them off for a spanking, a woman has to know that a man honestly cares about her and their relationship more than his boutades.⁹⁷

"FORCE MAJEURE" (29 MAY 2005)

Suppose that after much careful consideration and communication to ensure that M (a man) is decent and worthy, W (a woman) consents to a male-led relationship and transfers full authority to M. Perhaps they marry and she vows to obey. For many months or years, everything goes well and W willingly obeys M, who protects and cherishes her. But like all human beings, M sometimes makes mistakes and sometimes acts wrongly. Most of the time, these mistakes are not disastrous; but one day, M decides to drive W somewhere when he is under the influence of a mind-altering substance such as a high-strength prescription narcotic or more than a little alcohol. W is aghast at the idea and refuses, to which M replies that she has no choice and that she either trusts him or doesn't. How can such a scenario be resolved? What should W do?

My personal take on this is as follows. It assumes that (1) we are talking about people who live in a free society, and (2) that there has been no concerted, intentional employment of psychological programming/brain-washing, etc., on the woman.

(I make this second very specific stipulation because I think that people in emotionally intense relation-

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20150617005901/http://www.takeninhand.com/being.taken.in.hand.is.hot#comment-2031>>

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ship always end up doing some 'psychological programming' to each other; and I want to be clear that I am talking about someone whose will/self-identity, etc., has not been intentionally and profoundly altered through a systematic process, but about someone whose will/self-identity has been altered, if at all, only in the 'normal' way that can (does?) happen in any intense relationship. Though I guess it's not a bright-line issue when I think about it. Anyway.....)

It seems to me to be clear that submission or authority transfer, even when declared by the submitter to be enduring and irrevocable, contains an implicit element of constant contingency, constant re-commitment and re-evaluation, if you will. This is true even in relationships where there is meta-consent or consensual nonconsensuality, as in some Taken In Hand relationships; much more so in a relationship where the limits of authority transfer have been implicitly or explicitly defined to be something short of these extremes.

With this in mind the woman always has both the right and the wherewithal to withdraw consent. Even if she says, "I have made my last choice, and that was the ability to freely choose," this is, as a practical matter, not really true (again, in a free society). She must thereafter constantly *choose* not to choose again, even if she does not consciously do so.

What keeps a woman from withdrawing from that commitment, even when it causes her to cross some ethical/situational line she had

not necessarily considered when she granted it to the man, is entirely interior to the woman.

In some (relatively unusual) cases she actually *may* not be able to, having truly reached a condition of "internal enslavement." This is, of course, very similar to what happens in brainwashing, I think, in a lot of ways.

She may not be "internally enslaved," but may have invested so much in the relationship in terms of emotional capital, self-identity, etc., that she concludes that breaking her commitment to the relationship would be more damaging to herself than crossing the line that she is being compelled against her better judgment to cross would be.

Or she may see it as a point of honor, as a matter of personal integrity or self-identity that she not go back on her word, her commitment.

But ultimately, I believe, there can always be a deal-breaker.

This is why, of course, people must be very careful about making such commitments, if they do truly see them as commitments and would be bothered by the necessity to break them.

But given that is impossible to be certain that one knows everything about a person one needs to know in order to responsibly make such a commitment—I've been in the same relationship for over twenty years now, and I am still learning important things about my wife, and she about me, I think—the potential for this sort of re-assessment of things is always there, even among people who are very thorough and conscientious about getting to know

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each other, who have done a lot of "due diligence."

Then, too, people change *during* relationships, of course, so that as time goes by they are less the people they were when the commitment was made. Ideally they grow and change *together* as things go along, but sometimes, for whatever reason, they grow or change in separate ways; and this can cause a necessity for re-evaluation of whether one can or should stay in the relationship as well.

So what's the upshot of all this: what should W do in this case?

Ideally, M will listen to W's pleas that he not drive, or will later thank her for having taken away his car keys or insisting on driving herself or getting a taxi instead. But if he does not, she may have to take responsibility for her own protection.

How M responds to W's actions *after the fact*—whether he thanks her for saving them from his mistake or chastises her for disobedience—will say much, I think, about the shape of the relationship in the long-term, and may push W to the point of making the sort of re-assessment of the relationship to which I refer earlier here.⁹⁸

"FIRST THERE WERE THE BOYS... THEN THERE WAS BOBBY" (1 JUNE 2005)

I was once married to a man who was dominant (now deceased sadly) and 23 years my senior. Most of the time other women would hint at what they were thinking—"What is she doing with him?" As a successful, educated former beauty pageant

winner I sometimes wondered that, too.

Bobby took me.

I had developed the ability to intimidate men... and I am a spoiled brat. When a man would approach, I would just look through him, like I was bored, and then play. Wait; watch him. Most moved on, some killed themselves trying to bring me something, anything. Bobby walked over, and when I looked bored he stepped right into my space and didn't break my gaze.

It was like in Dee's article, "The submissive alpha female," except that he didn't arm wrestle me, he challenged me to a pillow fight. LOL! Of course he won. We were married within two weeks.

Bobby only spanked me seriously, twice. The first time was because I danced with his best friend: somehow I didn't think "dance only with me" meant slow songs. The second time, I purposely disobeyed his only other rule: I wore "his" underwear instead of the white cotton ones to college, which just infuriated him. The reason I did this? I wasn't getting attention from him; he was working late. I was scared he was losing interest, all normal fears for a wife. The next day I felt so secure sitting in a feminist lit class wearing my "granny" looking underwear.

Abusive? Hell no, I was never so babied in my life. Other women would comment on my loving husband, the perfect gentleman. He adopted my daughter and treated her as his own; he was the breadwinner. I was supported, cherished, valued.

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I think if I had been submissive or passive or softly spoken *The Taming of the Shrew* would not have been so interesting. I have started dating again and I am back to gazing, as if bored, right past most men. Its nice to know that there are still men out there who know how to be men.

P.S. You can't surrender control without having the trust necessary to give over care and custody of yourself to another. There is a difference between dominance and an asshole, I would never surrender to a man who didn't know how precious that is.⁹⁹

"WHEN YOUR LOVE DOESN'T WANT TO GET MARRIED" (1 JUNE 2005)

If you are in a relationship and want to get married but the person you are with doesn't believe in marriage, what should you do? Does it really matter if you don't have the legal document? Why do people feel uneasy when the person they love does not want to marry them?

If you are in this situation, then you could follow Dr Patricia Allen's advice (In *Getting to "I Do"*), and say something to your boyfriend along the lines of "I understand that you don't want marriage, and that is your right, but I need it, so if you feel you can't marry me then we can't be together any more."

However, before you do this, you need to decide whether or not you are prepared to end the relationship over this issue. Because when you say this, one likely reaction is that your man will walk away.

Dr Pat Allen advises that eight weeks is the maximum period that it takes a man to make up his mind. "If he hasn't called you in eight weeks, then it's over" she says. A "feminine energy woman" must look for a man who can fulfil her needs, not suppress her own needs in deference to his.

She says that a woman must love herself more than she loves her man. Therefore if her man can't give her what she really wants, she must move on and find another one. You don't make sacrifices for "masculine" men, because men are givers and women are receivers.

Dr Allen's idea is not that a woman should issue an ultimatum, merely that she should not settle for less than she wants from a relationship. If she wants to be married, then she should let the man she loves know that, and let him make up his own mind.

My own experience of men is that the ones who loved me wanted to marry me (and that included one divorcee). The ones who didn't, didn't.

In *Staying Married... and Loving It*, the sequel to *Getting to "I Do"*, Dr Pat Allen writes:

Nobody needs a piece of paper to get married. But I believe that if you want 100 percent commitment with the physical, mental, and emotional doors shut, you must be married legally.

It pains me greatly to have to admit that I agree with the author of a self-help book about anything, but I do think that marriage shows you

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are 100% committed more than anything else. I cannot deny the feeling I have that a person who doesn't want to be married is thinking, however subconsciously, that it will be easier to get out of the relationship if they're not married. The doors are still open.

It's not that I disapprove of people living together without being married or anything—that would be absurd. And if both people really and truly don't think that being married matters, I'm sure it could work out fine, but often one person wants to get married while the other doesn't.

If you are in this situation, there is the possibility that if he doesn't want to marry you it is because, as it says in the title of the book Carl recommended somewhere on here *He's Just Not That Into You*. Years ago I knew a woman who'd gone out with a man for ten years, he'd always told her he didn't believe in marriage, but then he met another woman and suddenly he did believe in marriage, he married her.

If someone doesn't want to be married, then however much they might rationalise it by saying that they don't believe in marriage etc, I would feel that there is a distinct possibility that they might change their mind when they meet someone else.

I know that you can think you want to marry someone and change your mind about that too. When I was getting divorced from my husband my lawyer told me about a woman he had acted for who changed her mind three hours after the wedding. And my husband's

niece was jilted by her fiancé three weeks before their wedding day, he'd been seeing someone else for months and she didn't know a thing about it.

In spite of any evidence to the contrary, I still have this feeling that if a man is really committed to a relationship he will want to marry you rather than just live with you. And the same goes for a woman. In my own case, the men who really loved me asked me to marry them; the ones who didn't, didn't. Nobody ever asked me to just live with them. If my husband had asked me to move in with him rather than get married, I don't know how I would have felt, but I think I might have had that feeling that he wasn't really that much in love with me.

My husband and I lived together without being married for several years after we got back together again after our divorce. Things were very turbulent for a while; we were always having a lot of rows and I always had the thought that, since we weren't married, it would be much easier for me to leave again if I wanted to. After things settled down between us and we were much happier, I didn't feel any inclination to leave any more, so when my husband asked me to marry him again, I was quite happy to do so. If I hadn't been, then to me it would have been a sign that I was still thinking it would be easier to get out if I didn't marry him again. To me, wanting to be married means that you have confidence that the relationship will last. I fully admit that that confidence can be misplaced, but I feel

that it is nice if it is there in the first place.¹⁰⁰

"HOW SHOULD A WOMAN DRESS?" (2 JUNE 2005)

Like many women, I have preferences about how I dress. At home, I like to be comfortable (but not in a disgustingly slovenly way). Out, I like to dress appropriately. In general, I prefer to dress modestly but elegantly. But if I am going to a party I might wear the standard little black dress (unless I were feeling like being different). If I am going to a ball, I wear a ballgown. If I were going somewhere cold, being warm would be my first priority. If I were going somewhere unsafe I might well wear Doc Martens, combat trousers and a tough don't-mess-with-me expression.

Women often find it fun to express themselves through their clothing choices. It is sometimes fun for them to experience the different reactions they get depending upon what they are wearing. And many women dress to please the man they love. If it doesn't wound your sense of self, where's the harm? Sometimes, having your dress dictated by the man you love can be an interesting, challenging and enjoyable experience.

But what of the single women who try to dress to please men in general? If the things men have said to me are anything to go by, you're probably better off dressing to please yourself. That way, if a man finds your attire appealing, you will know that you are compatible in that

way. At least, that is the conclusion I have come to for myself.

Things men have said to me:

- "You look sexy in jeans. You should wear jeans more often."
- "You were wearing jeans?! That's terrible! There's no excuse for wearing jeans!" (I hate wearing jeans, just because they are often uncomfortable.)
- "Hey, you should always wear short skirts!" (Well it could have been worse: I was once challenged to wear a made to measure dress to a party—of the clingfilm (Saran wrap) kind.)
- "I think women should go bra-less." (Not in public, please!)
- "There's a lot to be said for the burqa." (When looking at a bra-less woman in the supermarket.)
- "Why don't you show a bit more cleavage?" (Are you sure it's only cleavage you want showing?!)
- "Wow, that high neckline really suits you. You should always wear that line."
- "Wow! That dress is HOT! Why don't you dress like that more often?" (Because being mistaken for a prostitute is not an experience I want tooooo often.)
- "That woman looks so trashy. I'm glad you don't dress like that. Why do women think it's appealing to a man to leave nothing to the imagination? Dressing modestly is more sexy." (This is how I see it too. To me, it is more erotic, not less.)
- "My, black certainly suits you!"
- "You look really great in white. You should wear white all the time."
- "Colours! It's great to see you wearing some colour at last! You should always wear colour!"

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- “Women should dress conservatively—with high collars and skirts below the knee, like in those old black and white movies. Everything went downhill in the 60s and most women dress really badly.” (Swoon... OTOH, not when I’m sorting out the garage!)
- “You always look so elegant! How do you do it?!” (Well at least I’d changed out of my paint-covered DIY clothes!)
- “Why don’t you dress like a woman?” (What is the opposite of dressing to impress? 8-))
- “I like that girlie look with lipstick and jewelry.”
- “I don’t like makeup. Never wear makeup again.”
- “Aren’t you going to put some makeup on?”
- “You look really sexy in black jeans.” (I just wish they weren’t so uncomfortable!)
- “I don’t like trousers on a woman. Where are all your pretty skirts and dresses?” (D’oh!)
- “You look so feminine and vulnerable in that. I like that look!”
- “What you are wearing is too girlie. This mode of dress is part of the problem. I think it’s immoral to dress in this feminine way.” (This one made me wear said feminine dress more, teenage rebellion style!)
- “You look more like a dyke every time I see you. You should always dress this way! It suits you!” (That one was actually said by a lesbian, and I think she meant it as a compliment.)
- “I love those high heels. You should always wear high heels.” (Did someone say “masochism”?)
- “I hate high heels. Never wear heels again! Women should wear flat shoes and have bare legs.”
- “Haven’t you got some high heels you could wear?” (What? For a ten mile hike? Are you out of your mind?)
- “Great shoes! I like that school-girl look.” (Erm...)
- “Stockings and suspenders—be still, my beating heart. I wish my wife would wear those.” (That is more than I needed to know.)
- “You look really good in para boots and army trousers. I wonder what you’d look like with a crew cut? I like that militant masculine look!” (Well it makes a change!)
- “Your hair is every man’s dream.”
- “Have you ever thought of cutting your hair? Short hair might suit you.”
- “Promise me you will NEVER cut your hair, EVER.”

If you are a man, do/would you prefer your woman to dress a certain way, or to wear certain styles and not others? If yes, how/what?

If you are a woman, how do *you* prefer to dress? Do you have a preference? Does it depend on your mood, the situation, and so on?

How do you feel about the preferences of the man in your life?

Do you dress consistently with his preferences? If not, why not? If yes, how do you feel about it?

What, if anything, can we conclude from the sheer variety of men’s preferences? Or have you found less variety than I have?!

What is a woman to do?

In the face of all these conflicting demands, do you ever feel like staying in bed (alone)?!

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(It's all right, chaps, it's all good fun really!)¹⁰¹

"POWER CONNECTIVITY" (5 JUNE 2005)

My wife and I have been married for 25 years. We are soul mates and we have been tightly connected on many different levels. We have always been tight and integrated with each other!

When it comes to being connected, I imagine power cords running between a man and a woman, with each cord being a different aspect of their lives, and each cord having a different and unique plug configuration from the other cords. The woman has the special receptacle that may, or may not, match the plug configuration. When the plug matches the receptacle of that specific area of their life, a power link is made. The more of these matches, the greater the connection between the two. Different cords have different ratings of power. Some cords are big (important) and some are not.

For many (actually, most) of the important cords in our lives (the spiritual area, our value system, work ethic, goals, raising children, the marital partnership, male/female roles, etc.) my wife and I have matching plugs/receptacles. As a result, even before Taken In Hand, we were very connected.

On the other hand, there are some that we don't have. Take recreation and hobbies: I *love* to fish; she hates the sun and the smelly creatures. She *loves* caring for animals. Me—I really love my dog, but the other creatures that we've had through the

years for her or the kids (cat, Iguana, Cockatiel, Guinea Pig, etc) were way out of my league. I tolerated them and was tickled that she enjoyed them so much with the children. But, not my cup of tea! But, again, this was a small cord and our connection with the big issues generated the real connecting power in our lives.

When I discovered Taken In Hand well over a year ago, the whole aspect caused me to look at a power cord of mine that I had buried in the recesses of my mind. This power cord was there, but I had rolled it up and stored it very deep in the garage of my mind. In the past, I had always considered this cord (which I now call the Taken In Hand cord) to be a fantasy. I'm not a person who plays games. It was something that I had always wanted, but believed that it was a cord for which there was no real receptacle.

Then, because of this site, and my newfound information that there were couples that dealt with this power cord in a very intimate way, I just had to see if there was "connectivity" with my mate. I talked to her about it.

There was, and the cord (not just the discipline, but the dominance portion) was very big and *very* powerful. The energy that it generated was incredible and this connection was unlike any other. With the plug in place the dominant portion of my lead position became an exciting part of our lives. I always was in the lead role. It was just that before, I didn't exercise the force behind the position, if you know what I mean.

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This newfound power has added an excitement to our lives that continues to surge.¹⁰²

"HOW IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER MALE-LED RELATIONSHIPS?" (9 JUNE 2005)

How is the Taken In Hand relationship different from other male-led relationships?

Many male-led relationships exist that are not Taken In Hand relationships. In many cultures it is virtually impossible to choose anything other than a male-led relationship, especially if you are a woman. The Taken In Hand relationship is freely-chosen or it is not a Taken In Hand relationship.

Even in the West, where we have a legal right not to be in any relationship we don't freely choose, some women cannot be said to be choosing a male-led relationship. It is not enough to have a legal right to choose otherwise. It must be a fully free choice, not made under duress, threats, coercion or toxic manipulation. It must be something that both the man and the woman wholeheartedly want, and on an on-going basis. Whilst some Taken In Hand wives want *not* to have a choice and want their marriage to be irrevocably male-led, and act accordingly, taking responsibility for that choice and making it work, that is in itself a free choice on an on-going basis.

The Taken In Hand relationship is consensual or it is not a Taken In Hand relationship. Consensual non-consent is consensual, as has been argued at length on this site.

A couple chooses to be in a Taken In Hand relationship if and only if they both *prefer* this kind of relationship.

The Taken In Hand relationship is *consciously* male-controlled. There are many traditional relationships and other male-led relationships in which the man leads in the relationship but the couple are not aware of this as being in any way erotic. For it to be a Taken In Hand relationship, the couple must be consciously aware of the control in their marriage, and consciously choosing it. Both husband and wife in a Taken In Hand relationship actively prefer that the husband be in charge in their relationship, and find the idea erotic.

The Taken In Hand relationship is monogamous and sexually exclusive. It is between one man and one woman exclusively because that is what both wholeheartedly prefer. Taken In Hand couples tend to be exceptionally happily married, because being in a fully-committed, permanent, fully-invested, thoroughly and consciously sexually-exclusive and faithful marriage provides a concentrated focus that creates and amplifies erotic intensity over time. It also affords profound intimacy and makes any problems that arise much easier to solve.

In being in charge, the husband in a Taken In Hand relationship has a lot of power over his wife. Wanting to do no harm, he takes care to put his wife and their relationship first. This is a key difference between Taken In Hand and other forms of male-led relationship.

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Some male-led relationships are all about the man. By contrast, Taken In Hand is for both husband and his wife. In taking that view, we reject the idea that either spouse *should* do x or y, as if it were a *duty*. Taken In Hand is not about gritting your teeth and doing your unpleasant duty or bearing a burden, it is supposed to be fun and sexy for both spouses.

The man's control in a Taken In Hand relationship is real, not just a game.

The Taken In Hand relationship is not about enacting stereotypical roles such as that of the 1950s housewife or the D/s "Dom" or "sub". Human beings are complex entities and trying to make yourself fit into such boxes is likely to be stultifying and psychologically suffocating rather than conducive to a good relationship.

We don't believe there is a recipe for a Taken In Hand relationship, or that there is one true way, or that everyone should be in a Taken In Hand relationship, or that there are true men/women/etc etc, or that those men who don't want to be in charge aren't real men, or that those women who prefer to be in charge aren't real women. We reject all such statements.

The Taken In Hand relationship is evolvable, not fixed, and each person supports the evolution (growth of knowledge) of the other and of the two jointly in the relationship.*

What other differences can you think of, anyone?[†]

"BARBIE IS THE DOLL, KEN IS JUST AN ACCESSORY." (9 JUNE 2005)

Reenie wrote:

I told my husband about Taken In Hand awhile back. Then he started punishing me at least daily. I explained that for me Taken In Hand is not about punishment. Now he's got it into his head that it's about total submission and rituals in the bedroom and it's NOT. Can somebody PLEASE HELP ME explain it to him better?[†]

Excuse me, but maybe explaining Taken in Hand is not what you should be considering. You need to first step back and question whether or not you are ready for a relationship that involves physical punishment. The Taken In Hand thing can be all of the wonderful things others say it is, but it can be physically and psychologically dangerous when one or more parties in the relationship are not ready for it. The words "daily punishments" send up all kinds of red flags for me. Don't go into this game until you've got your black belt in communication skills.

Has he demonstrated initiative to see how the new turn in the relationship is working for you? If not, maybe he's less ready for this than you are.

* [Editor's note: This is an FAQ question; please bear that in mind when posting on this thread. Ensure that your post answers the question. ...]

[†] See: <<http://www.takeninhand.com/forum/have.you.got.the.wrong.end.of.the.stick>>

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I believe that for those whose orientation leans in this direction, the Taken In Hand relationship can be fantastic. I do not believe, however, that everyone is ready for the high-octane charge that goes with corporal punishment. Women should never feel they are less than cherished. Remember: Barbie is the doll, Ken is just an accessory. There is an ocean of vanilla women out there that are, by contrast to a Taken in Hand partner, boring. You have no reason to assume that you have to endure an insensitive, cruel or dull-witted partner.

Best of luck¹⁰⁴

"WHY DO SOME PREFER A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP TO A CONVENTIONAL RELATIONSHIP?" (10 JUNE 2005)

Why do some prefer a Taken In Hand relationship to a conventional relationship?

Because for those of us who like this sort of thing, a Taken In Hand relationship is more fascinating, more fun, and a lot more hot for both spouses.

Because it is not true that a long-term marriage is bound to lose its sexual charge or go stale: Taken In Hand marriages remain highly charged and white hot in the long run, not just for the first three months.

When spouses remain excited by each other, there is more warmth and more good feelings all round. This enables the two to be more intimate and less defensive with each other. They are much more likely to

remain happily faithful to each other.

When spouses are in a good state of mind, sexually excited by each other, and intimate and non-defensive, they are more willing to give each other the benefit of the doubt when there is a problem, and they are more likely to be able to solve problems that come up.

When spouses find their relationship and their spouse fascinating and fun, that makes it much easier to get through any tough times that occur in the course of their married life together. Boredom and a lack of interest in the other person can lead to either frustrated dissatisfaction or sadness, marriage-breaking affairs, and divorce. For those who have the Taken In Hand inclination, a Taken In Hand relationship gives the spouses a *positive, delightful* reason to stay happily and faithfully married rather than relying on the very grim, negative argument that it is your *duty* to grit your teeth and suffer the horrible burden of being faithfully married whether you like it or not.

When spouses are solving problems together rather than digging in to entrenched defensive positions, they are more forward-looking and can make progress both individually and jointly in a way that is impossible when there is bad feeling, a lack of sexual fulfilment, or when their relationship has lost its vibrancy and become more like a platonic friendship.

When couples are excited and happy, they have more energy than they would otherwise, and they can use this energy to do good things in

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their lives and more widely. Their happiness warms the hearts of others they meet, because they tend to be smiling rather than flat or sad. A little thing like receiving a genuine and radiant smile from a complete stranger on the street can make a person's day. And that person then in turn tends to be nicer to others, which makes them feel good, which puts them in a better frame of mind to solve their own problems, and so on!*

Why do *you* prefer your Taken In Hand relationship to a conventional one?¹⁰⁵

"IS TAKEN IN HAND A MATTER OF MORALITY?" (14 JUNE 2005)

Is Taken In Hand a moral issue? Is this something everyone *should* do? Is this the 'one true path to a correct relationship'? Are those who prefer other kinds of relationship immoral?

No, Taken In Hand is not a moral issue—something everyone *should* prefer. Leave categorical imperatives out of it. It is not your right, and it is not your spouse's duty. Nor are other couples, whose relationships are not Taken In Hand, immoral. To think otherwise would guarantee that your own relationship will never be a Taken In Hand one, since to be a Taken In Hand relationship the

relationship must be freely chosen and wholeheartedly wanted on an on-going basis by both spouses.

It may seem thrilling to Taken In Hand folk; it may feel natural to us; it may be the only possible relationship that some of us could or would consider; it may be morally unobjectionable for those who enjoy it; but it is absolutely not that we think that we have a moral right to demand such a relationship. It is one possible choice among many, and it must be a genuinely free choice.

Taken In Hand folk think of the husband wearing the trousers as a very precious part of their relationship and they feel thankful and thrilled that the other person also wants this kind of relationship, not *entitled* to it. If you think that that there is a *duty* to be in this kind of relationship, a *duty* to be in control or controlled, what you have in mind is nothing to do with Taken In Hand.

In relationships in which the power is deemed a right and a duty, this causes no end of trouble and leads to much misery. For example, if a man thinks he has a right to be in control, or that his wife has a duty to obey him, then when his wife doesn't immediately do what he expects, he will feel aggrieved, because of his false idea that he is *entitled* to be in charge. He may become angry or start demanding obedience as the *sine qua non* condition of the relationship. He may become spiteful and punitive.

Similarly, when a woman thinks she is *entitled* to be controlled by her husband, she can become very demanding, resentful, accusatory, hor-

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **Why do some prefer a Taken In Hand relationship to a conventional relationship?**]

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ribly inconsiderate, and behave generally abominably. This is nothing to do with Taken In Hand.

I can't myself imagine why anyone would think such treatment would be in any way encouraging to the other person. How much better things would go if instead of thinking of their relationship as the other person's duty and their right, they took the Taken In Hand line that the purpose of the husband wearing the trousers is to create a white-hot sexual connection, and that no one owes anyone a Taken In Hand relationship.

To avoid killing the other person's desire to engage in this kind of relationship therefore, even if the kind of relationship you want is a very extreme, irrevocable one, it is vital not to have the attitude that you are entitled to this. That will turn the control into a chore instead of a choice. Not very appealing, is it?

Whether it be a Pat Allen style relationship or a 'total power exchange' one which you both regard as permanent and irrevocable, *consensual* means that both persons wholeheartedly *want* this kind of relationship on an on-going basis. Try to retain an underlying gratitude that the other person shares your desire for this instead of dragging him or her down by making it a moral issue.* That way, the two of

you will be more likely to develop and maintain a white-hot sexual connection, and ever-deepening joy in your marriage.¹⁰⁶

"CLOSING THE GAP" (14 JUNE 2005)

Ever notice how life sometimes kind of sneaks up and gets in the way of our relationships, even when we are trying not to let this happen? I know that Mike and I get busy often; we lead a fairly hectic life at times. Mike has been working very hard, and I have been carrying the home along as best I can. We spend time together as much as possible but still even when we are together we are not always connecting. When I look back on it I can always tell when it started happening because I start with a feeling of being slightly off balanced, yet not being quite able to put my finger on exactly what is making me feel this way.

Usually there is nothing "wrong". We are going along happily but a distance starts to form up between us. It happened this week. Mike had his mind on his job, and a new development there. I understand how it can be difficult so I let him be, give him time and space to work it out. He had sort of stopped paying attention to the home front. He was there, but part of him I felt was elsewhere. Over a couple of days this distance starts to grow and a chill kind of descends on our relationship. That is the only way I can describe it. The

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'one true path to a correct relationship'? Are those who prefer other kinds of relationship immoral?]

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heat and passion is the first thing to go.

One sure way to tell it is happening is by how we sleep. Normally we sleep a bit like cats, all curled up together. But when this starts to happen there is almost a wall between us. We sort of turn our backs on each other and go to sleep. This started to happen for the third night in a row last night and I said to Mike, "Is there something wrong?" He asked me what I meant. I told him that he was acting a bit like my brother rather than my husband! Normally he cannot keep his hands off me, but for the last few days he was kind of gently draping his arm over me, brotherly hugging me is the only way to describe it.

The really funny thing is that he then said, "I have noticed that you have become a bit distant over the last couple of nights." This was crazy because it was *he* who was distant right??! Well so I thought. Whatever it was, was happening between us both and we were giving each other space to work things out. Not really what either of us wanted or needed. This distance was creeping kind of like a dark chilly shadow between us, and we both saw it. What we both thought was that the other person was becoming distant.

So Mike says, "I know a sure way of taking out the chill." I know what is coming, what I even want to come, but I resist. I say that he cannot very well spank me for him becoming distant! How is that supposed to work? He laughed at me, tilted up my chin looked into my eyes and said, "Hmmm, well do something bad quick, so that I have

a good reason to spank you!" He said, "Come on you are just stalling, we both know what we need to happen right now." That was that. The spanking was firm, but short. It was perfect for what we needed. It was enough to rekindle the fire, we ended with great sex and we both fell instantly asleep all curled up in each other's arms.

In this instance, Mike's loving guidance was there in full force. He quickly saw what needed to be done, and did it. It was not really discipline, and although it ended in great sex the spanking was not purely erotic either. It fell somewhere in between. But what it did perfectly was close the gap between us and put us right back on track. In these moments I revel in what we are accomplishing and wonder why it took us so long to get here.¹⁰⁷

"A GOOD LEADER ACCEPTS THAT HE IS ONLY HUMAN" (15 JUNE 2005)

A good leader accepts that he is human. That he suffers from human frailties. That he may, at times, be selfish, petty, even vindictive. A leader moves others to a future state, usually by non-coercive means. A good leader accepts that he will have moments of human weakness along the way and stays alert for them so that he can mitigate the damage. A great leader uses his weaknesses to advance his group toward the goal.

In a Taken In Hand relationship, the man must be even more vigilant to his humanity. The passions and tensions inherent in an intimate and sexual relationship pray upon hu-

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man weaknesses. The emotions invoked are visceral and primordial. They come from a place before words, where selfish want lingers. It is only by accepting that he will feel these emotions; that he can be prepared guide these animal lusts to benign, perhaps even useful, outcomes.

A leader in an intimate relationship must be willing and able to look at his reflection in his lover's face and see his true self. He can only do this by putting her first, so that he is tuned to the slightest alteration of his image in her eyes. Any distortions must be corrected immediately unless, by conscious choice, he allows them to linger to advance both of them toward the goal. A leader must be willing to see himself crumble in her eyes if necessary; yet remain resolute in his commitment to seeing her through to the new state of relationship he envisioned.¹⁰⁸

"MY LIFE, MY CHOICE" (15 JUNE 2005)

I live in what is called a Master slave relationship. My husband is not simply my mate, though he is that, nor is he simply the love of my life, though he is that as well. He is also my owner and as my owner, owns all that I am, and owns all that I own. Over my purpose and my life he holds the complete authority.

Getting to the how of it is probably the easiest. For the most part I live as any other wife with children, laundry and hot flashes. What sets our relationship apart is that should he choose to take on the microman-

agement of the household and me he has the right to do so. That would be the nuts and bolts. As property I don't listen to what I want to listen to on the radio. Even if he is not home I listen to what he has directed me to listen to. That's a for instance, folks. There are very few occasions where he is going to direct me in something so small as to what radio station I listen to. But, it is his right to do so.

I do not own anything of my own. I only make decisions concerning money, the maintenance of my body or the disposition of a single piece of clothing when I am directed to do so by him. In the not so recent past he gave me the directive to only wear what he gave me permission to wear. Before I went to my bath in the evening I would ask him what I was to put on after. I would wear that and only that until given permission or the directive to change clothing. If he forgot to add shoes to the list in the mornings then I went without shoes until such time as he directed me to put some on. If he had told me to wear my six inch stilletoes to work in the garden or do the grocery shopping that is what I would have done. This order didn't last long as it took entirely too much time and energy on his part, but the right to give it and expect it to be carried out is his.

You may ask how I can let someone dictate to me this way. When you ask that, you are asking the why of it but I can answer the how. It isn't easy and there are times when I buck as hard as I can. But, how I do it is the same as the devout who can "let go and let God". I am learning

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to let go and let my owner. As I said, it isn't easy. I'm a dominant personality in my own right. But, I need this to be happy in relationship and I'm willing to try every day to let go a little more.

This is not an issue for gender politics. There are women and men on both sides of the property owner line. This is about choice. I have chosen to put the all of me into the hands of the man named Scott. A man to whom I am married but to whom I *belonged* long before the fact of the marriage.

But now we have to come to the why of it. This is a question which is always much more difficult to answer than the how. For as long as I can remember I needed, desperately, someone who could be in control of their world. I needed to feel a rock at the center of the ever changing, ever turbulent sea that is my Self.

I came of age in the 70s at a time when the phrase "politically correct" had yet to come into common usage but the notion of being "correct" in a cultural sense had taken hold. It was offensive to many to teach girls that being in a relationship of subordination to a man was a good thing. So be it. But, in getting rid of this attitude the baby got thrown out with the bath water and the choice which so many women had fought for was gone. To be anything other than a working woman who shared equally with her mate the rights and privileges of money, sex and politics was not a choice to be made. The choice to be a homemaker or a mother were met with questions such as "When are you going back to work?"

All through school I tried to keep my focus on college and a career. None of it appealed to me and given a particular set of circumstances I rebelled and ended up married at 19 and the mother of three by the time I was 24. A homemaker, miserably depressed and almost completely unable to function. My poor husband was (is) a very sweet man who would have given me the world on a platter but couldn't give me what I needed: direction, control and limits. In his mind that would have been wrong. Not as in a bad choice but as in Wrong with a capital W.

After a divorce and an incredibly unhealthy relationship with a sociopath and the birth of a daughter fathered by him, I was torn to the ground. I had no idea of who or what I was and had to rebuild myself from scratch. I didn't do a great job but I did learn that finding what I was calling, at the time, the "strong, silent type", was the right thing for me, and I didn't have to make any apologies for that.

It was at this time I discovered the organized BDSM community. Initially I was fascinated because my orientation for sex had always veered toward the odd. Fantasies of bondage, role play and masochism had always been my fellows in the search for good sex. I found bondage, role play and SM. But, more importantly I found a vocabulary by which to express my need in relationship to a man. In finding that vocabulary I also found my master.

Making the right choices is generally a difficult thing to do. Especially when the world at large is telling you that the choice you are making

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is Wrong (again with a capital W) and you, yourself have learned nothing to tell you it is the Right choice. But the proof is in the pudding, so they say, and for us this is the right choice to make.¹⁰⁹

"IS SHE AFRAID OF LOSING CONTROL? TOPPING FROM THE BOTTOM?" (19 JUNE 2005)

Several months ago, someone wrote that a fledgling relationship has just ended because the man expected what he called "submission" (unquestioning obedience) from almost the first meeting. This poster is desperate to be in a taken in hand relationship, seems to have a very warm heart, and is clearly very intelligent, but none of that made any difference to the man. If she wanted him to be in charge, he said, she should stop "topping from the bottom" and "just obey".

What that poster's new man didn't have (apart from common decency and civility) was an understanding that relationships do not spring into life ready-formed: they have to be *created*. Relationships arise out of the wishes, ideas and values of the two individuals *and through their interactions together*. Each relationship starts from nothing and develops and evolves over time, changing each individual, which changes the interactions, and changes the relationship. There is no shortcut for that process, and there is no recipe.

If you have a fixed idea of what the relationship must look like, and then expect the other person simply to step into the role and read the

script you have written, you are not interested in creating a real relationship, you are asking the other person to act a part in a badly-written play. Whilst it can be fun to act in a play sometimes, the idea of spending one's entire life over and over again playing the same role in the same play is, I'd say, decidedly unappealing.

Would *you* want someone prepared to do that? Wouldn't you find that a little... worrying? What kind of person would want to play a lifeless stereotypical pre-written role in your play, when he or she could instead create a dynamic, vibrant, ever-evolving, endlessly fascinating, fruitful *real relationship*? Wouldn't that raise the question in your mind: *does this person have anything to offer?* and a whole host of other questions?

It may be fine to read someone else's script in a scene of limited duration. But a Taken In Hand relationship is not just a scene, and not just an unending scene either. It is qualitatively different. It is no surprise to me that the very experienced owner of an SM dungeon said that Taken In Hand is the scariest thing she has ever heard of. Handing over real power to another is *dangerous*. And the more power a woman might want to hand over eventually, the more dangerous it is for her.

Even in a conventional relationship, the early stages of the process of creating a relationship will not and cannot look like a well-established relationship. That is all the more so in a Taken In Hand relationship. A woman wanting to give

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considerable power to the man needs to check very carefully and thoroughly that the man she is getting to know is worthy of the power he will have. It would be foolhardy to hand over unlimited power to a man you barely know! Be realistic!

At the beginning, the two people need to do a vast amount of talking, negotiating, and questioning, to make sure that they are actually compatible. You need to know that you probably aren't going to end up in several pieces in the freezer. It takes time for an individual's true colours to show, and it is completely unreasonable to expect the other person to pretend that you have already established that you are compatible, decent, and worth the risk.

The woman needs to know that it will be possible for both to be happy in the relationship. She needs to know that the relationship will be compatible with and supportive of the growth, development and endless improvement of both individuals. She needs to know that the relationship will be able to withstand major as well as minor problems that will inevitably crop up. She needs to know that the relationship will have the problem-solving institutions necessary to *address and resolve* problems. She needs to know that the man does not merely *say* that he believes himself to be fallible, but *acts* as though he believes himself to be fallible. If he treats every problem or disagreement as a power struggle or insubordination, he is acting as though he is infallible, and until he stops reacting like that, he is never going to be anything other

than an abuser. The woman needs to know that he will listen to her rather than silencing her with complaints of "topping from the bottom". She needs to know that he will care about her needs and wishes in the relationship rather than be a self-serving megalomaniac. She needs to know that if or when she reaches the point where she can never bring herself to disobey him, he will not abuse that power.

The correct attitude to the woman's questioning, raising problems, seeking discussion on anything that is troubling her, is to welcome it, not accuse her of "topping from the bottom" or "controlling with complaints". If a man expects perfection or the absence of any problems to resolve, that kind of disconnect with reality is, or should be, a red flag to the woman.

The more power the woman is prepared, eventually, to hand over to the man, the more vital this process is, and the more important it is that the man demonstrates that he is a reasonable, calm, decent fellow who will not abuse his power. If he acts as though the woman's happiness is irrelevant, her questions, an imposition, her worries, an insult, and problems she raises, "controlling with complaints", "nagging", or "topping from the bottom", then she may quite reasonably conclude that the man does not have the qualities necessary to handle the power she wants to give him.

Perhaps he does, but if so, he needs to show that he does, and the kind of reactions I have just mentioned suggest that he hasn't got the slightest idea how to conduct him-

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self in a position of power. This is *not* about expecting perfection from the man. The odd bad reaction is not going to raise a red flag. It is about whether this kind of thing is a *pattern*.

Not all men are ready or will ever be ready for a Taken In Hand relationship. It takes more than wanting one. It takes great strength and good character. It takes the ability to admit mistakes and make changes when there is a problem. It takes a lot of things. The mere fact that a man is dominant does not make him strong or in any way a good person. There are some dangerous, abusive men out there. Expecting her to hand over power without checking that you are not such a man is completely unreasonable and unrealistic. She *needs* to take the time to check what kind of man you are.

So please, men, do not expect a woman to hand over power casually. Do not expect it to happen immediately. Expect it to take a long time—and I don't mean a few months or a few weeks. Assume that the vital process of checking that the two of you will be good together will take the entire first year, and you won't be far wrong. It might even take longer. The relationship will still be developing 30 years down the line, so what is a year in the greater scheme of things? Think of it as an exploratory adventure! Be patient. Be realistic. Be reasonable!

If the woman says that she wants you to be in control, take her at her word. Don't think that that means that she is saying that there is no need for the checking process! Don't think that she is saying that she has

thrown caution to the wind and is going to become a yes-woman and do your bidding without question from now on. Don't think that the need for negotiation is over.

What it means when a woman says that she wants the man to be in control is the same thing it means when a sensible, reasonable man says that he wants to be in charge: it is a statement about the desired direction of the relationship rather than an unrealistic suggestion that it is possible just to step into a role without so much as checking out the script first. This is not about stepping into a preconceived role at all, let alone without reading the script and checking that the production company has what it takes to bring the production to Broadway. It is about creating something real—a relationship that has life, energy and the capacity to change the lives of both individuals in a positive way.

The woman who wrote said that her new man had accused her of being “afraid of losing control”. *Of course* she was afraid! You'd be crazy not to be afraid! This is *dangerous*! If this is not obvious to you, you just don't get it! And if you don't get it, you shouldn't be doing it.¹¹⁰

“STEREOTYPES” (20 JUNE 2005)

Taken In Hand is not about enacting stereotypical roles in stereotypical relationships. That is inimical to the progress, improvement, enlightenment, and growth of the individuals involved, and of the relationship. A relationship starts from nothing. The two persons begin as equals at a

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distance, and gradually, as they get to know each other and interact together, their interactions change them.

Some may enjoy enacting fixed roles; others prefer to behave in ways that come naturally to them given the person they are with. With one woman, a man might feel very much like taking charge from the outset, whereas with another, things might be different. He might never feel it with that woman, or it might grow as their relationship develops.

How two individuals are with each other changes over time. Stepping into a preconceived stereotypical role is definitely not everyone's cup of tea. You don't have to take any notice of "rules for submissives" or "advice to dominants" or anyone else's idea of what or how you should be. You don't have to feel inadequate if you don't feel inclined to kneel for every man who happens along. You don't have to act out a cardboard cut-out stereotype: you can be your unique and full and evolving self.

Perhaps some like the idea of enacting a stereotype, but those who find that abhorrent may well want to distance themselves a bit from stereotypes such as "dominant", "submissive", "a real man", "a feminine woman".

It is not a matter of denying our true natures, it is a matter of embracing fully our true natures. Our true natures are complex, dynamic, ever-evolving—anything but stereotypical.

Language is important. Words can define us. When we apply a particular label to ourselves, we start to

view the world and ourselves through that label. This tends to push us into a stereotype instead of facilitating valuable personal evolution.

So if you feel uneasy about calling yourself X or Y, or if you do not think of yourself as Z despite others' protestations that you are most definitely Z, do not try to swallow your unease. Instead, listen to your inner voice, and allow yourself to grow and change in all your complexity. Allow yourself not to be forced into someone else's narrow box. They may think you fit into it perfectly and not see what all the fuss is about, but they are not you, and they can't see into your mind.

It does not matter if others don't understand. It doesn't matter if they think you are silly. It doesn't matter if they think they know best. It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks.

On the journey of life, you have to be honest with yourself. Ignoring such unease and pretending that you fit in a particular box is not being honest—either with others, or with yourself. On the journey of life, you have to start from where you *are*, and move forward together from *there*. You can't pretend to be somewhere you're not, just to avoid upsetting the stereotypical applectart.

If you do not feel comfortable fabricating a fake persona for someone who wants a stereotype rather than a unique human being with a unique perspective, personality, and ideas, don't do it.

If you don't want to be called "submissive", you will be told that you must be dominant really but not

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know it, or that you are in denial. If you are a man who eschews the "real man" idea, you will be told that you must be a wimp, submissive or gay. If you question the idea of being "a feminine woman for him", some will conclude that you are a hard, bossy, bitchy woman or a "butch dyke". That's life! You have to live your own life the best way you can, maintaining integrity, including in terms of the labels you use to describe yourself.

If stereotypes do not sit right with you, you do not have to pretend they do. And you will make more progress in your life if you don't.¹¹¹

"TOO FEMININE?" (21 JUNE 2005)

One of the things I like about this site is its efforts to help readers feel free from pressure to force themselves into rigid boxes. It seems to me that there is a lot of pressure from all sides in myriad ways. Many of us have felt pressure to be one way or another. Let's not add more pressure in any direction. On the one hand, there is the pressure to be a stereotype, but as many Taken In Hand readers will have experienced in their own lives, there is also pressure to avoid like the plague anything remotely resembling what might be called a stereotype.

Women who feel themselves to be "very feminine", or "submissive", and men who enjoy thinking of themselves as "a real man" or "very masculine", are dismissed and derided as "stereotypical". Such put-downs are just as mean-spirited and pressuring as pressure in the oppo-

site direction. Individuals should feel free to embrace themselves as they experience themselves, and to explore in ways that seem best to them. No one should be pressured either to be feminine, or *not* to be.

Once when I was wearing one of my favourite dresses, I received a lecture from a well-meaning acquaintance about the evils of stereotypical behaviour. Apparently, this dress of mine (which is extremely comfortable and washable, unlike many of my dresses) is not just "too feminine" but "part of the problem" leading to "the subjugation of women." In wearing this dress, he said, I am "potentially harming children".

If your mind is bogging, let me assure you that the dress is not indecent or anything! It has a close-fitting top with a sweetheart neckline, long sleeves, and a long and flared skirt. What my acquaintance meant was that because women want to wear such dresses, little girls grow up wanting to wear such dresses, and little boys grow up attracted to women wearing such dresses, and that what we all should be doing is systematically rejecting this as being too stereotypical, so that people grow up free from psychologically confining ways of thinking. (Or something like that!)

Paradoxically, the result is that I do not always feel free to be myself with that person. If I don't want to get a lecture or feel like a pariah, I have to wear more unisex clothes that I know he won't disapprove of. Sometimes I wear what I want to wear, but sometimes I do ask myself if my attire will get me a gentle but negative comment, and if I don't feel

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up to it (occasionally I just want a quiet life!), I change. I don't think this is a good thing.

Although I wholeheartedly agree with my friend that there is pressure to enact the stereotypes, I do not think one can live one's life in the way he suggested. I do not think that one should be dressing to avoid disapprobation in the way I sometimes do. I think that it is a mistake to put pressure on people not to wear "feminine" dresses. And it is not just about how women dress, of course. There is a lot of pressure on women in Western society to be high-powered career women. Mentioning that you are not a feminist can provoke some to rage, as I have discovered on more than one occasion. Similarly, there is a lot of pressure on men to be "new men" and to "get in touch with their feminine side" (or else).

So when I say that it would be a mistake to pressure others to define themselves in ways that feel stereotypical, narrow, or otherwise wrong to them, keep in mind that I abhor pressure in either direction, not just one direction.¹¹²

"THE CARROT OR THE STICK?" (22 JUNE 2005)

I've had a lot of very important matters to deal with lately, but my mind keeps wandering. I have a man on my mind. He is short and bald but he made a big impression on me. Not immediately, but over the weeks I saw him—on television—a reality TV show, at that! Yes, I know, I know, but bear with me.

I certainly hadn't intended to watch this particular television series but somehow, when I found it while channel-hopping one evening, I was drawn in and ended up watching it every week until it finished.

The scenario? Twelve young men picked for their lack of motivation and bone idle tendencies—to call them "sad losers" would be being charitable—were divided into two teams of equal fitness and put through extreme military training, competing against each other in trials.

The beginning of the series set the scene: the two teams were driven, with bags over their heads, to two locations in the Brecon Beacons. Upon arrival, one team, the Carrots, were welcomed to their camp with a cup of tea and a game of frisbee, followed by group drumming around the campfire and meditation. The other team, the Sticks, were belittled and insulted, forced to don army uniform, had their heads shaved, and were each given a number instead of a name.

The Carrots were under the command of Ben Clayton-Jolly, an ex-SAS man under instructions to use only positive reinforcement—praise, rewards, encouragement and team-building—in his training. They also had the benefit (if you like that sort of thing) of extra psychological support from a softly-spoken, highly sensitive, New Age hippy fellow with a penchant for bongo drumming, dancing naked round the camp fire, communing with nature, poetry, tinkling bells and blowing a conch shell and suchlike. The Carrot team lived in a cosy tepee, wore

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their own clothes, and meditated for 20 minutes every morning. The Carrots were to be built up and nurtured, soothed and encouraged.

The other team, the Sticks, were the unlucky ones. The Stick team leader, the aforementioned short, bald man, Sergeant Major Roberts, and his sidekick, Staff, were under strict instructions to use only the stick—lots of bellowing, threats, punishments and endless pressups. On no account could the Stick team leaders ever praise the men or express satisfaction, no matter how well the team might do. The Sticks were given no home comforts and no team building.

When the Sticks lost a trial against the Carrots, the punishment was severe. When the Carrots lost, they received team-building pep talks and commiseration from their leader and his sidekick. When the Carrots won, they were rewarded with spending money, hot showers and celebratory dinners. When the Sticks won—well, they were thankful that they hadn't lost!

The programme's ostensible purpose was to determine which method would produce better results: the carrot or the stick, but really it was just a bit of fun—light entertainment appealing to the sadomasochist in all of us.

At any rate, it was clearly never possible to determine which method would produce better results. For a start, several of the Carrots found the naked drum-beating and such-like a little embarrassing and silly. In fact, instead of finding these New Age activities rewarding as they were supposed to, they found them

intolerable and refused to do them. This wounded the New Age sidekick of the Carrot team leader so much that he was unable to remain positive all the time. And when hurt, he lashed out like a little boy, using words as weapons against those he was supposed to be supporting and rewarding. So much for the rule that they should use only positive reinforcement!

At the beginning of the training, the Stick team members were completely unaware of the nature of the game they were playing, and they were naturally upset and rebellious. Morale was very low, and it seemed as though some of them might walk away. They clearly considered their team leader and his sidekick to be hateful monsters.

But soon, thanks to the Carrots jeering at them as they were being harshly treated, the Sticks cottoned on to the nature of the game. At that point, they realised that their leader and his corporal were not speaking (or rather, shouting) from the heart, but merely doing what the game required. The Stick team members no longer took all the shouted insults, punishments and reprimands personally. They were no longer misled by the overt form of the way they were being treated. From that moment, they interpreted everything positively, and they pulled together and decided to win the game.

The Stick team leader made valiant efforts to use only the stick, but he clearly felt very troubled by the prohibition against expressing any praise or satisfaction. He said that in the British Army, they use a combi-

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nation of carrot and stick, never just the stick.

As he watched his team transform from a bunch of utterly useless louts into a disciplined, effective team, he nevertheless obeyed the rules of the game: his words and tone of voice were only ever peremptory and punitive. But his eyes told a different story. In his eyes, I saw growing respect and eventually even love for his team. They must have seen it too. At one point, he was so moved by how hard his team had worked that I thought he was going to cry. By the end of the game, there was an air of mutual and almost reverential respect and warmth between Sergeant Major Roberts and his men.

At one point, when the Sticks had lost one of the trials against the Carrots, the punishment was to carry around a huge, immensely heavy tree trunk. They had to remain in contact with the tree trunk even when they were asleep. The Carrots, having had a celebratory meal around the camp fire, drunkenly crept over to the Stick camp and took video film purporting to show that the Stick team members were not in contact with the tree trunk while they were asleep.

The next morning the Carrots summoned the Stick team leader to look at the video film. When he realised why he had been called over, he was absolutely furious and would not watch the film or hear anything said against his men. He expressed his outrage very loudly and intemperately. In that moment, it seemed as though he explosively released all the tension he had been feeling by virtue of his discomfort with using

only the stick. His men (and half the county) must have heard everything.

The Sticks won the game. The Carrots could never quite get it together. They never formed a real team, and they never became disciplined enough. There was back-biting and bitching and verbal bullying and, in some cases, no will to win.

Why am I mentioning this reality TV series? It is not because I think it really tells us that the stick is more effective than the carrot—it does not tell us that at all. Had the Sticks not been able to interpret their leaders' treatment of them positively, they would have fallen apart. No, what this series actually showed is that respect and warmth can be conveyed in subtle ways, even in imposing the most extreme military discipline, even when shouting in the harshest tones, and even during the most painful physical punishments. The way that tough barking Stick leader's eyes gave him away was heart-melting.

Similarly, when I was at school, there was a particularly gruff, stern, strict, commanding, curmudgeonly master who was nearing retirement and was very old-fashioned in the way he treated us. Most of my classmates were terrified of him and hated him, but I looked into his eyes and saw his soul. I could tell that he had a kind heart and I found him adorable. My classmates could never understand why I smiled so warmly at him—or why I invited him to my birthday party—or why he came. Perhaps they missed the tiny flicker of a smile on his face whenever he tried to chastise me. But I didn't.

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It is easy to be misled by the obvious, by the overt form of an interaction, by how things *look*. I know I have often been—just like many can't imagine why any woman would want to be in a Taken In Hand relationship. But I try to remind myself that to see what is really going on—to understand the deeper quality of the interaction or the relationship—you have to look beneath the surface, beyond the overt form, and to the psychological substance. The form can sometimes look good, kind, gentle, nice—while the psychological substance is torture—as the Carrot team would tell you. Or it can look deceptively alarming, as it did in the case of the Stick team training. The form does not tell you what is in the heart. But sometimes the eyes can.¹¹³

“GIRL ALPHA SEEKS ALL MAN ALPHA” (23 JUNE 2005)

[Please note that the woman who wrote the following personal ad is no longer available but her piece below remains on the site because it is so quintessentially Taken In Hand.—The Editor]

There is an article on these boards by a man by the name of Eric, who writes about “The resistant woman.” That article speaks to me on several levels: The first being that I am what Eric would categorize as “resistant” in that I am a “worthy opponent” and although I am deeply, deeply feminine, I am not feminine in the cookie cutter way some might think of as feminine. Oh, I look like a girl, dress like a girl, act like a girl, I do in

fact, purely love being a girl, but I am no Stepford Wife. I am tough minded, bright, funny, witty, and politically astute. I make my living daring the other fellow to blink first. I hold a number of politically incorrect opinions, and while I am not deliberately unkind or crassly controversial, I will, more often than not, make my feelings known. I say this in all honest candor; I can quite literally hold my own in any arena.

I am not naturally submissive. In fifth grade my teacher sent home the following note attached to my report card: “Kim is a natural leader with many fine qualities; however she does not suffer fools gladly, and can be quite dismissive to those she finds tiresome. She has been a challenge, but I have been enriched by having her in my class this year.” I was 10 years old. I am now 45, and nothing has changed. I have perhaps learned more patience, but I am still an “enriching challenge.” You will be many things if you are part of my life. Bored will not be one of them.

I believe it goes without saying then that any man corresponding with an eye toward a long term romantic relationship with me would need to be very self-confident, with plenty of attributes to back up that self-confidence. There are rewards, I believe, to being engaged with me on any level, and the rewards increase as the level of intimacy increases. I may not readily and whole-heartedly jump into a relationship, as several missteps of late have made me more inclined to reticence, I’m afraid. I am looking to you to help me out of the tree I have climbed to avoid the panthers.

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The other level that Eric's article spoke to me on was quite simply one of heartening. It did my heart good to think there really might be men who can understand and appreciate strong women, who can give as good as they get in the relationship arena. If life is something of a battleground (and my experience has taught me that life, while beautiful and sacred, is also a war zone, even at the best of times) who would you want in your corner? Would you want a blindly obedient, supercilious simpering ninny; or a woman of passion and fire, loyalty and spirit? Having said that however, know this: I want my man to lead in all things.

If it seems a contradiction in terms, it is because—it is. That is the magic and the mystery. If all I were seeking was another perfectly nice man I could lead around for a merry chase, I wouldn't be here.

If what you are looking for is a woman to dominate because you need to dominate something, after all, and everyone "knows" women are easy, then please do not correspond with me. I am sure there is a perfectly nice woman out there for you, but I am not she. If your idea of leading our relationship is writing a bunch of rules up I "must" follow, please don't correspond with me. Trust me, darling, we would only end up hating each other, and I don't want that.

If, however, you have the brains, and the nerve, and the true virility to go the distance for a long-term romance/relationship with a former unrepentant daddy's girl, who spends her time about equally di-

vided in the brat and angel camps, and who can occasionally use a little help finding her way back to the correct camp, perhaps we should talk.¹¹⁴

"PATIENCE, INTEGRITY...AND BEING A LITTLE SWEET ALWAYS HELPS" (24 JUNE 2005)

Up front I ask your forgiveness for indulging in a little thinking out loud, but hope you will forgive me because I do believe that ultimately this will lead to some insight in what some of us women types mean when we use the term "alpha male".

It's not about some prescriptive list of rules meant to stroke the "dominant" male ego. It's not about beating my butt over some real or imagined infraction. (Okay, well, but it's not only about that.) It's not about being mean, abrupt, or dismissive to teach lessons that are indecipherable, anyway. It's not about being called "Sir" because that gets you off, because I'll say right now, the only reason I would call my Significant Other "Sir" is if that was his name. Sir Jones. Sir Smith. Like that. Even being knighted by the Queen still won't get you called "Sir" by me. I'm an American. We already had that war. My side won. Look it up if you don't believe me.

But enough about old wars, let's talk about more recent wars. Let's talk about sex.

I have known this man for about a year. Let's call him "Mark" (since that is his name, and that's less confusing for me.) Mark works for the DIA (Defense Intelligence Agency)

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as an US Army Reserve type. I more or less work for another governmental alphabet agency (don't tell anybody, it's a big secret) and last fall Mark and I worked closely together on a major project. We got along quite well, although we had several significant differences of opinion. Mark would remain calm and respectful throughout these heated exchanges; I did not always conduct myself likewise, but that's par for the course, I'm afraid.

We got to be fairly close colleagues, and then good friends. I liked him swell. Then one day last spring he tells me he has been attracted to me since Day 1, and would really like us to start seeing each other on that level. Well, two things: First of all, I did not want to risk losing his friendship, because we all know how seriously awry things can go in the whole boy-girl department. Secondly, physically, I just wasn't feeling it for him.

Of course, what with the 18-hour days and all, I just wasn't feeling it, period, if you know what I mean.

Anyway, I was honest about how I felt, he was gracious, and our friendship continued. He continued to make it clear how he felt about me, and I continued to think it just wasn't going to work. He said on numerous occasions, "You know how I feel. If you ever think you could feel similarly, all you have to do is say the word." I would laugh and ask him, "What word is that? Sex?" And he would smile and say, No, dear. Love." And that was very sweet, but still I found myself thinking: Just Not Alpha Enough. I had enormous respect for him, and for

his work, but I just couldn't see us together like that.

Then just recently some things happened to make me think perhaps I judged in haste. Most recent example: He was promoted and transferred to the East Coast. He really didn't want to go, but he thought he could really contribute in his new slot. Then not one, but two dream jobs opened up in theater (Iraq) which would have placed him back on Active Duty status and cleared the way for his promotion to flag rank, a goal of his which was fairly important to him. He turned them both down, citing a moral obligation to his new slot (not legal; he was in no way bound) of at least one year's duration, as they had already begun the training cycle with him. He called to vent, and was somewhat annoyed that these two slots opened up less than 24 hours after he had signed the acceptance letter for his new job. His attitude was basically, "Can you believe this garbage?" And then, "What do you think?"

Well! I, of course (because hello? I'm a little nuts) blasted him for not going for it and telling DIA to stuff it. I reminded him about how much work he had put into his Army career, about how much it meant to him, and about how chicken I thought it was he wouldn't go for it. I was so exasperated with him, and I really let him know it.

I think I may have hurt his feelings, but instead of withdrawing from me behind a wall of disapproving silence he said, "I'm sorry you feel that way. It bothers me you think less of me because of a decision I have made. Part of me agrees

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with everything you have said, and part of me wants to do just that. But I gave my word to these folks, and they have acted upon my word in faith. A non-voluntary mobilization would be one thing, but this would be different. This would be walking away from a commitment I have made for the sake of personal expediency, and that's not who I am. I know I asked for your input. Thank you. Now the subject is closed."

Then he asked me about one of my doggies that are sick. He didn't get huffy. He didn't get defensive. He just let me know where he stood.

Well! (Again!) So I said to him later, "For the record, I do not think less of you; on the contrary I think a lot more of you." Then I asked him, "Out of curiosity, if we were together (he laughed affectionately, which was pretty hot) would your response have been any different?" He said, "No."

And I hung up the phone, and I thought, "Hmm. I wonder how he feels about corporal affection?" And then, all kidding aside, I have been thinking that it is very gutsy of him to declare exactly how he feels, always letting me know exactly where he stood even when he was supremely annoyed with me either as colleagues or as friends, but still, knowing he may face rejection, and not letting that deter him. So no matter how I act, or how I feel in the moment, he stands in the same place. That, I think, might be very freeing. That's Alpha.

As they say down here in the south, "That might could work." But might is the operative word. All this just happened, and I have some 168

thinking to do, because (full circle) there is the bit about the sexuality, n'cest pas?¹¹⁵

"DO WITH ME WHAT YOU WILL" (25 JUNE 2005)

I've been trying to figure out where I sit in the Taken In Hand spectrum. I'm not really interested in taking a woman to raise. I don't want to always be correcting her like she is flawed. What I love is that "do with me what you will" attitude.

I, like many, developed a desire to spank a woman when I was young. And I found spanking fun. The little conflict that passed over her face as she struggled to submit. The look in her eyes as she pouted afterwards. The little yelps as my hand meets flesh. However, I discovered what I really wanted was the attitude the spanking invoked, not the act of spanking.

I learned that I could also create this attitude not only by spanking but also with caressing. What it took was to coax the woman to surrender herself to my attentions. I've come to call this attitude the True Girl. If I create an atmosphere where the woman feels protected but also treated childishly such as being spanked, the woman seems to leave and the True Girl shows up. I find that if the True Girl can be lured to reveal herself and you provide her with intimate, non-sexual attention, you can touch an unfulfilled need in her. I believe this need is to be cared for without strings. This causes a very peaceful mood in her which I find terribly addictive. This causes

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me to just want to hold, caress and enjoy her. I find myself wanting to cause this in every woman I know.

So what if anything do I get out of this, besides a contented woman which many men would give their right arm for alone? What I have found is that the woman becomes submissive and tries to please me aggressively. I do not believe this means the woman is a submissive. But rather, that she enjoys the submissive feelings induced by feeling protected and the freedom to give herself over to returning the attentions. In any case, she gets the "do with me what you will" attitude I so dearly love.

Personally, I believe this is Taking In Hand, just by a different path. I can see myself spending my days creating situations where a woman in my life feels safe enough to let her True Girl out to play under my care. It certainly doesn't mean this girl won't find herself going over my knee but rather than trying to correct bad attitude, it'll be to maintain a good one. Of course, there are other non-corporal ways to maintain the attitude to explore.¹¹⁶

"NOT ALL MEN WILL GET IT UNLESS YOU EXPLAIN" (26 JUNE 2005)

Rewind to 1967. You may have been just a child or not born then, but please humor me. I am a freshman at a small liberal arts college in a major metropolitan area. There is a "mixer" in my dorm and the boys are standing on one side of the room while the girls stand on the other.

One of the girls is tall, lean, and good looking. Like an eager border collie, I cut her out of the herd. We hang out together quite a lot.

But the relationship does not quite click, she gets back together with her high school boyfriend, and they get married. End of story.

Well..... not exactly.

Fast-forward 2 years. I am now a student at a large public university in the same metropolitan area. One weekend day the phone rang and one of my roommates says it is for me. It is her. She is also a student at the university and has seen my name in the student directory.

I said, "You must not be married any more." She said that was true. We hung out together again, mostly at her place since I had roommates and she didn't. But again the relationship was not quite right.

The signs were obvious really, but I didn't get it. I was just dumb with a capital "duh." She could have picked up a book, smacked me in the head, and said, "Listen bozo, if you want a real relationship then act like a man." But it is just as well she didn't because I would have said "ouch" followed by "huh?" and walked away, shaking my head. I was not ready to be a leader then; I may not be now.

That was not fascinating, so what is the point? Here is the point.

When you meet one that could be right, you may need to smack him in the head and explain the situation. If he says "ouch" followed by "huh?" then you probably have not missed anything.

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Eventually one will say “ouch” followed by “bend over now young lady.”

That might sound silly, but it could work.¹¹⁷

“ALPHA MALES AND THE WOMEN WHO LOVE THEM” (27 JUNE 2005)

I've always had a thing for alpha males: even when I was a little girl, I instinctively knew when I had come in contact with one. I'm not talking about men who swagger and boast and try to act macho—as far as I'm concerned, men like that are alpha-male wannabees. A true alpha male carries himself with a quiet self-confidence. He doesn't have anything to prove: he's comfortable in his own skin. He knows who he is, and what he wants, and how to go about getting it. He has that rare quality that we call charisma or magnetism.. And his age doesn't matter: young or old, it's just a part of his make-up.

Alpha males have fascinated me for as long as I can remember. I respond to this kind of man on a visceral level. All of my senses come alive when I'm around one of them. I suddenly become more aware of myself as a woman and intensely aware of them as a man. I've never felt more feminine than I do when I'm with one of these uncommon men.

When I was a much younger woman, I once had a relationship with a man who had these qualities, and I loved him like I've never loved another man since. I'm sorry to say that the relationship didn't work out,

for reasons that I won't go into here; let's just say that I believe timing played a big factor in the failure of our relationship. It's a loss that I still feel to this day though, and one that I'll probably carry to my grave.

The thing that struck me about this man, and what made me love him so much, were the many facets of his personality. He was such a contradiction in some ways. He was a fairly big man, standing 6'1" and weighing 210lbs of lean muscle with rugged good-looks, and he had a competitive nature, which goes hand in hand with being a Special Forces soldier.

He was a man's man—tough, aggressive and self-driven, and certainly a hard man at times. And yet, he was the most gentle man with women and children that I have ever known. Never once in five years did he ever raise his voice to me in anger. In fact, when he was angry, his tone would become even more quiet, and that got my attention better than any yelling ever would have. He was never rough with me, his hands were always gentle on me even when he was angry. Although he did swat my bottom occasionally if he thought I needed it; but he wasn't rough in his handling of me.

It always struck me as odd, how this man who was trained to kill men with his bare hands if necessary, was so incredibly careful and gentle with me. He once said, as he stroked my arm tenderly, “I would never hit a woman...because they are too fragile and can be hurt too easily.” My heart twisted when he told me that, but I was silently amused too, because I realized that although

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he would never “hit” a woman, he had no compunctions whatsoever about spanking them, if he thought it was needed.

He was a very protective man, of women and children in general, and even more so if you belonged to him. He could be possessive at times, but yet he allowed me my freedom and space. He was an intense and passionate lover and could make me melt with just a look. I never felt so safe as I did when I was in his very capable, loving arms. His touch could ignite my blood and calm my soul like no other's. He was the love of my life, and I'll never forget him.¹¹⁸

“A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO TAKEN IN HAND - FROM A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE” (27 JUNE 2005)

I think the Bible gives an ideal explanation of what a Taken In Hand marriage (or other relationship, for those who choose not to marry) should be. I'll try to paraphrase it in such a way that the religious tone is excluded, which for me is a bit difficult, but here it is:

Ephesians

The husband leads the marriage, and the wife is submissive and respectful to her husband.

A man loves his wife as his own body. He who loves his wife loves himself.

A man leaves his father and mother and unites with his wife, so they can become one.

I Corinthians

The husband shows respect and love toward his wife. The wife does likewise toward the husband.

The wife does not deny the husband her body. Likewise the husband does not deny the wife his body.

Neither spouse denies the other, except by mutual agreement for a limited time.

In short, the man leads, the woman follows. They both cheerfully and lovingly do what they can to satisfy each other's needs and desires. I think that encompasses nearly all of the variations of the Taken In Hand relationships.¹¹⁹

“THE UNEXPECTED BENEFITS OF SURRENDERING CONTROL” (28 JUNE 2005)

I just noticed a wonderful side effect of our Taken In Hand relationship that I had not anticipated. Since becoming Taken In Hand (or surrendered, as Laura Doyle would say) I have let go of control of my husband and his “stuff” that does not concern me. Going a step further, I have given my husband control of me and my “stuff” that does not concern him.

One of the things that I have found is that since I have let go of control over him, I have been able to let go of trying to control other things that I simply can not control. This includes other members of my family and situations which are simply beyond my sphere.

For example, I used to spend large amounts of time trying to plan things and figure out how things would work in every conceivable situation. I believe now that this was

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my way of feeling in control of something that I simply have no control over: the future. Yes, one should think about different courses of action when a decision needs to be made but what I was doing is well beyond this by any means of measurement. I could get obsessive. I find I don't do that a tenth as much as I used to.

I think that, before, controlling everything was how I felt secure. I needed everyone to know that I was capable and in charge and that I didn't need any help. Yes, even my own husband. I wanted to make sure that everyone knew that if anything happened to him or our marriage, I would be okay. One of the things I realized is that relying on him doesn't mean that I would dry up and blow away if he was gone. Now I have started to feel secure in my husband's leadership.

I think I am just one of those people who will try to take care of everything if I let myself. That's how you get points in my world: the least selfish, most giving person wins, right? Well, that doesn't leave anything for me. I am now learning to let my husband take care of me and I am learning that leaning on him doesn't make me weak. I mean, if I can't lean on him, if I don't want to rely on him, what the heck did I marry him for?¹²⁰

"ON BEING THE SERVANT-LEADER IN MY RELATIONSHIP" (29 JUNE 2005)

Some couples new to Taken In Hand assume that Taken In Hand is just another kind

of D/s relationship, but there are some differences. One of those is that in a Taken In Hand relationship it is the husband's responsibility to lead and more specifically to be a servant-leader.

Unless the couple are enamored by a master-slave relationship, the husband should be taking the lead by demonstrating his concern for his wife's well being. There are any number of ways this concern can be expressed, including by a disciplinary spanking.

However, the husband should not be sitting back and doing nothing while the wife does all the work. It is perfectly fine for the husband to have reasonable expectations about how he would prefer some things in the house to be, and his wife should be willing to make those changes, but he should not be sitting around expecting her to do all the work while he watches TV or reads the newspaper.

My wife and I have a fairly traditional marriage with traditional roles. She has responsibility for taking care of the home which means she does most of the cleaning, cooking, shopping, etc. I take care of the yard, the home maintenance, the automobile upkeep, the finances etc. However, I am not above pitching in and helping her when she needs help with a particular chore. I sometimes cook, help her clean up the kitchen after dinner, do laundry, clean the bathrooms etc.

I do not give my wife lists of chores to do: she is perfectly capable of managing our home. In fact, if I were to begin to meddle in this, I would only gum up the works lol !

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She does a lot for me that I never asked her to do. She takes notice of the things I like and makes sure she provides those things for me. She spoils me. :)

Although I am the head of our home and have final say authority, in many ways I see our relationship as a partnership. A committed relationship depends on both having equal responsibility toward the health of the relationship. Being the head of the home does not mean being a dictator. The more that both share the responsibilities of living together, the more likely the relationship will provide for the individual needs of both members.

Neither of us are perfect in our commitment, but just the simple recognition that it takes the effort of two to make the relationship work goes a long way in fulfilling the relationships promise.¹²¹

"GETTING IT RIGHT TAKES TIME" (30 JUNE 2005)

It has been almost a month since I brought up the idea of taken in hand to my hubby. We came from a place where the intimate portions of our marriage had gone stale: we were great friends and only occasional lovers. Three children, two busy demanding businesses and 4 horses kept us focused on everything but one another.

I have always had ravishment fantasies. I wouldn't call that rape because I was and am willing. I have never been raped, but I was attacked once and I would never wish for that to happen to me. Do I want for my

wonderful husband to come home and push me on to the kitchen table face down, pull down my pants and take me? Yes! Absolutely! [she says with a big grin]

Searching the net in an effort to understand my fantasies is how I found Taken In Hand. In reading here, I realized that I craved much more than a simple fulfillment of a fantasy. I wanted to feel his control and guidance in everything, every day. I am very much my own person and am perfectly capable of doing anything, but that has nothing to do with my emotional needs. Having him lead this way, I feel cocooned and safe. I was scared of the world around me, but I was scared of losing him. We were losing each other little by little.

In the beginning, I was so eager to feel his authority I was pushy and overly communicative. But my wonderful husband took it in stride. He listened to every rambling thought I shared, he read everything I wrote for him to read. I think he knew that for me, anywhere but where we came from was better. He told me several times, "I don't think this will happen overnight". I was so very scared that if I didn't push it along, things would go back to where they were before. It wasn't terrible before: we weren't unhappy before but we were just co-existing with amicable kisses in the morning and at night and the occasional obligatory sex session.

Until now, despite everything I have read, I didn't get it right. But now I think I understand the journey, I understand my needs and where they come from. I still may

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not understand why. I do know that I feel safe and less vulnerable and less defensive under his guidance. I feel cherished, loved and more desired than I have felt in a very long time. I feel fully loved and fully surrendered to him sexually. This way of life has helped me get rid of some demons that kept us from fully experiencing everything we should be able to enjoy together. I am accepting of what little discipline he chooses for me and finding myself calmer and more reassured because of it.

So for those of you reading this who are new to Taken In Hand, don't be in a hurry. Sort it out *slowly* and search yourself honestly, and you will find and understand your desires. Taken In Hand helps any conflicts dissolve and it makes the connection much much deeper.¹²²

"MY EXPERIENCE OF TAKING MY WIFE IN HAND" (1 JULY 2005)

I asked my husband to write for me what taken in hand has meant to him. Tonight is our 21st anniversary and he obliged me. Here is what he wrote. With his permission I share it with you.

Forty-something wife

...

Happy Anniversary!

Today is an important day to my wife and me. It is our 21st wedding anniversary. I thought that there might be some interest in how the last two years has been so wonderful, whereas the first 19 years were not.

My father raised me to put women on a pedestal. Open their doors. Treat them sweetly. Defer. Act like a gentleman at all times. My father very seldom pushed the point with my mother. She won most arguments by default. When he did try to assert himself, their roles were so set in stone that he had no chance. Although he was a "man's man" in public, a big man whom other men looked up to and tried to emulate, in private he was a pushover.

As I look back on it, the image is kind of like taking John Wayne, and while keeping his honor and respect for women, sending him to finishing school so that he lives his life with proper comportment, rubbing off all the rough edges, until he looks more like Jimmy Stewart in *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* than the hero who saves the day, and who, by the way, gets the woman (Yeah, I know, I know — Jimmy got the girl in that one!).

So I entered into marriage with this idea of a man. Nice, sensitive, sweet, shy, romantic. I tried all of the romantic candlelit dinner, mood setting, ambience enhancing methods I could think of. Poetry, song. But something was missing.

Plus my wife was *very* strong willed, or so it seemed to me. She says that she was normal and I was just a pushover.

I remember when we were married just a few years. My wife asked me to spank her. I didn't get it. I had in mind "You've been a bad little girl, haven't you?" But that wasn't what she wanted. She wanted a *man* in charge of a woman, not play acting where she had to assume

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the role of a naughty little girl. Instead of explaining exactly that to me, she got frustrated, mad, and probably a little embarrassed and said "forget it."

That was the last I heard of it for about 16 years.

The next 16 years followed the same pattern. Nobody really in charge. The two of us butting heads. Usually I would give in, but I was passive aggressive, and she lost more and more respect for me. If not for our strong belief in God and dependence on him, and if not for our strong commitment to our vows, our marriage could not have lasted. But it wasn't a marriage that honored each other, or that honored God.

Then in our 19th year of marriage, she explained her desire to be disciplined. She told me what she really wanted. Oh, I thought. What a difference from what I thought she wanted. And what an amazing difference from what my father taught me women wanted!

So we tried it again. And she loved it. It was like a match had suddenly lit off a fuse connected to an unlimited storehouse of gunpowder. BANG! I couldn't believe the response. She was so sexually interested! Amazingly motivated. After 19 years of being married to what I thought was a frigid hausfrau, I was now married to a woman with sexual need, with magnetism, who couldn't get enough of me. And I couldn't get enough of her.

Eventually she found this web site, and a few others. She began to explain to me about a dominant and submissive relationship, which honors each other and God, where roles

are defined, where both partners are secure and happy.

And so our relationship expanded from a sexual nature to all aspects of the marriage. We had begun to develop a Taken in Hand relationship and we were both extremely happy.

I believe this new state of affairs is an answer to both of our prayers. All this time we waited, and after 18 years of artificial sweetener, when we tasted the real thing we knew this was for us.

My wife has been very patient with me, as I often tend to revert back to my old deferring self. She reminds me of what it used to be like, and I don't want to go back. Just because she resists doesn't mean she doesn't want to follow my authority. I am learning to be strong, yet just. Firm, yet loving. And I am learning to accept the respect she gives me now, respect I didn't even have for myself in much quantity in the past.

As we begin our 22nd year of marriage, I am thankful for my wife. I am thankful she explained her needs to me. I only wish she had not waited 19 years to do it!

Here's looking forward to the next 21 years, dear.

I love you...¹²³

"I LOVE OBEYING MY HUSBAND" (1 JULY 2005)

I discovered this site about a week ago, and find it so loving. The members really understand that Taken in Hand is NOT about abuse. It is about the love shown by a husband, towards his wife. By being the head

of the household he is protecting her, and teaching her to be a better wife and person.

When I was in college I did a paper about The History of Women's Lib. One thing was obvious very quickly. In the old days the divorce rate was so much lower. Back then, in the 1940s and 50s, it was acceptable for the husband to punish the wife. Look at old movies, TV shows and ads. There were so many images of women being spanked. Not abused-spanked.

It was then and there that I decided this was the kind of marriage I wanted. I wanted it for real, not role play. I wanted a dominant husband, who would set limits for me. And I wanted him to punish me if I went beyond the limits.

I was so lucky to meet my husband. Right from the start, he told me he wanted a wife who would not work outside the home. When we got engaged, we sat down and discussed all the rules and limits. I was to get an allowance. I would have a bedtime. I would get a list of chores. I was expected to dress like a lady. The list went on. Anyway, we decided that he would alter these limits as needed.

I do not like being punished. I hate being spanked. So, I try to obey my husband. This is the part I love... being obedient to him. But I must admit, when he does punish me, I feel ecstatic because I know that he does it with love.

We are now married 19 years, and never mentioned divorce!¹²⁴

I would like to emphasize the importance of taking your s/o in hand and building your relationship with her with the strength of being confident enough in yourself to really listen to what she has to say without the worry of feeling manipulated.

Often times the communication a strong-willed, intelligent, "submissive" woman is an attempt to communicate a need to her partner, but because of a fear of being manipulated, the man sometimes fails to listen to her. He is afraid of appearing to "back down" because he knows that is a sign of weakness in her eyes.

Hearing and understanding legitimate concerns allows a woman to speak freely and express herself so that the relationship can evolve. Being able to tell the difference as to when she is communicating or just trying to get out of a discipline session requires the strength of being able to listen and understand. Being a man with honor and integrity that she can trust also aids in her ability to submit.

All these things contribute to the ability for a couple to go very deep into each other and knock down barriers of communication. She can completely trust him and therefore submit to him as he provides an environment of care and understanding. It becomes easy to intertwine with each other and lose sight of where you end and your partner begins emotionally and spiritually.¹²⁵

"THE SUBJECTION OF WOMEN" (4 JULY 2005)

Subjection: (noun) 1. The act of exercising lordship or control; dominion, domination, control. 2. Submission; obedience. 3. Subordination. 4. Subjugation. etc.*

Subjection: 1. forced submission to control by others. 2. the act of conquering; conquest.†

Conquest: (noun) 1. the act of conquering. 2. mastery of something difficult. 3. the act of winning the love or sexual favour of someone.

The subjection of women raises the ire not just of a few feminists but of all decent people. Women who want to be brought into subjection—and there are many such women—have a lot of explaining to do. Men who countenance subjection—are there any? Given the risk of being thought to be an abusive predator, is it any wonder that the idea of subjection—even if the woman wants that—is repugnant to most men?

Subjection is not for sissies. It is difficult. It is dangerous. It isn't the done thing. It sounds non-consensual.

Like rape.

Actively exercising control; dominating. Forced submission to control by others. *Forced*.

It is easy to get so tangled up in the words that we lose perspective. We forget that conquering the woman and bringing her into subjection wins her heart. We lose sight of the fact that after *forced* comes *submis-*

sion. We get hung-up on the *form* at the expense of the *substance*.

"Bring a woman into subjection? No! I must have consent, or I will not control. I abhor violence! I am a firm believer in fully equal rights for women."

"What I want is a *submissive* woman who will willingly *surrender*, not a shrew who needs to be tamed."

"Forced submission? If submission is not freely given, I don't want it!"

If a woman *wants* to be brought into subjection, *ipso facto*, she is fully *consenting*.

If a woman *wants* to be brought into subjection, that is not like *The Subjection Of Women*. It deprives no one of any rights.

If a woman *wants* to be brought into subjection, it is not like *The Taming of the Shrew*. She gives her submission just as freely and willingly as the one who surrenders.

The *form* may be non-consensual, but the *substance* is fully consensual.

"But why does she want this? If she wants her man to lead, why doesn't she just follow him?"

Some women want and need to be brought into subjection. They crave the man's control and respond positively to active control, but without active control on his part submission is impossible. These women cannot fake submission; it must be real. It cannot be a pretence, a role-playing game or a lifeless cardboard cut-out imitation. It must be from the heart and soul, no hint of artificiality, acting or mendacity. But when a man brings such a woman into subjection and thereby releases her deliquescent submissiveness, the power and reali-

* (Source: an ancient OED)

† (Source: princeton.edu)

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ty and unforced naturalness of her submission can be awe-inspiring.

Do not be misled by a woman's need for subjection: it does not mean that she is dominant but in denial. It is often the most resistant women who are the most deeply submissive.

Such a woman might feel the need to be controlled whether she likes it or not—constrained by an unstoppable force; restrained; bound, reined in; no choice; no decisions, hers; under his authority, his lordship, his control—not because of incompetence, emotional lability or any lack of desire to take responsibility for her own actions, and not because she needs a man to make decisions for her, but just because that is the way it has to be. Because it feels right and proper. Because primal forces compel it. Because she wants it and he relishes it. Because to worship his power and strength, she must feel his power and strength even when her own is undiminished. Her full self in all its strength, overpowered, conquered, in subjection. Resisting, and finding that resistance is futile, she can finally relax. She needs that safety. She needs to be sure that he won't crumble under her strength. She needs not to be in control, not to have a choice, not to place limits on the man's power. No lists of rules for the man to follow, no shoulds, no ifs and buts, no no's. In subjection. Letting go completely. Peace. Floating on air. Effortless flying. Paradoxes. Out of body and totally relaxed, yet so present and excited that the intensity is indescribable. Power in powerlessness. Freedom in chains. Deep autonomy in bondage. The self

strengthened in subjection. She stoops to conquer. Force wins her love. Deep serenity. Surrender. Peace.

Men who have brought a woman to that state—that melted, peaceful, dreamy state, that state of grace—have spoken of it with awe in their voices and echoes of ecstasy in their eyes. They have talked about the delectability of it, the life-changing power of it, the intense eroticism of it. They do not sound like burdened, resentful men who have grudgingly beaten a woman into subjection.

Nor should it be assumed that the force required to bring a woman into subjection is necessarily violent. It might be, or it might not be. It might involve physically restraining a woman, or physically forcing her to obey, or it might not. The force required in the subjection of women is not necessarily physical at all, but psychological: force of will. It might just involve a kindly quiet word here or a little firmness there. It can happen when a man merely looks at a woman, piercing her eyes with his until she is too flustered to hold his gaze.

The force only works to the extent that it reaches the woman's heart and mind. It only works if she wants it.

“Be that as it may, why would a man have any interest in fighting a woman for control?”

Whether physical or purely psychological, the subjection of a willing woman is not fighting. Fighting is sniping spouses lashing out at each other. Fighting is wounding words

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that can never be unsaid. Fighting is cruelty and spite, pain and distress.

If a woman *wants* to be brought into subjection, it is not like that. It is nothing like that.

“But still, the question remains, why bother?”

For fun. For the adventure. For the higher purpose of creating the conditions under which the two of you can scale the highest, most challenging mountain of life together, working together and supporting one another all the way.

Because not every woman is happy to pretend to be something she is not. Because not everyone feels right when she fakes submission.

Because not every woman *can* be submissive in the absence of subjection.

Because if the two of you behave in ways natural for each of you instead of trying to act out stereotypical roles, the relationship that evolves between you will be richer, deeper, and more genuinely suited to the two of you as the unique individuals you are.

Because if you can bring a woman into subjection without needing her to diminish herself to make it possible for you, you will have fully mastered her, and you will both know that, and it will inform all her actions in the future.

Because when such a woman is brought into subjection, she bonds so strongly and completely that there is nothing she wouldn't do for you.

Because that is what it may take to make her totally yours.

“Sounds like a lot of work to me. Why would any man want a woman who is so difficult?”

Why, indeed?

Most don't, of course. Most prefer the path (or indeed woman) of least resistance. Most prefer “easy”. And that's fine – for them.

But some of us—men and women alike—do not stick to the easy path through life. Some of us prefer “difficult”—because worthwhile endeavours are usually difficult, and that which is easy often turns out to be less valuable in the end. Sauntering along a well-travelled path doesn't take us where we want go. We want to scale the highest mountain.

And if you want to scale the highest mountain, you have to be sure that the person you are climbing with is up to the climb. It would be no good trying to drag someone weak or unwilling up the mountain.

Some men with “mountain-climbing” aspirations have no time for the idea of subjection. They are impatient to begin the exciting adventure, and understandably just want to get on with it, not have their ascent impeded by a resistant woman. To them, a woman who needs to be brought into subjection is a woman who is pulling in the opposite direction before they have even started the climb.

But, gentlemen, what that woman is doing is not impeding the climb but sensibly checking all the ropes and other climbing equipment, double-checking that they are both strong enough for the climb, and querying any potential problems she has identified so that they will be as

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well-prepared as possible when the climb gets tough. The better prepared they are for the climb ahead, the better the actual climb will be. If a man is too impatient, lacking in insight about what their intended endeavour entails, or unrealistic or blasé about the dangers, is it a good idea for the woman to put her life in his hands?

Some men do understand a woman's need to make these pre-climb checks, and (with a willing woman) enjoy the challenge and find it amusing that a woman might question or try to test their strength. They do not find it insulting or threatening, they find it a fun aspect of conquering a woman. It would never occur to these men to complain or ask a woman to be more submissive or obedient: they simply take action and *handle* the woman. They relish the contest of wills that brings the woman into subjection, just as those passionate about sword fighting relish their next fight. It's all part of the adventure!

These men inspire worship. Reverence. Deep gratitude. An overwhelming desire to kneel, to please, to obey. Passion. Peace.

In subjection. Mastered. Conquered. His.¹²⁶

"ALTERNATIVE THERAPY" (5 JULY 2005)

When a woman feels inadequate or has failed in some aspect of her life she often wants her man to help her overcome whatever fault or weakness led to her time of despondency. However while she might want her man to consistently

provide ongoing encouragement with respectful, practical help or kind and strengthening words she does not necessarily want him to let every specific incident of gloomy introspection pass as if it had never occurred. Not always, but occasionally, there will be situations where prior to his provision of gentle comfort and useful assistance she will want him to lead her to a secluded location and there she would have him acknowledge her weakness by asserting his strength intimately and sharply upon her veneer of self assurance. On such occasions she does not want her failures to be concealed or brushed aside but, rather, she wants her vulnerability to be emphasised; hoping not to reveal herself, but yearning that with irresistible power she will be revealed. She wants nothing to be hidden and nothing to be withheld and as howsoever the man she loves would expose her, so she desires to be exposed, in order that his acceptance of her should be complete.

Thus made vulnerable she kneels before her man in affirmation of his lordship over her and affectionately acknowledges whatever instruments he has chosen with which to provide the required rebuke. Restrained by his will and her own respectful fear she longs for him to caress her tenderly but not until he has first sensitised her soft and feminine curves with the application of a thorough and masterful volley.

She is aware that often her man will become amorously aroused through the act of disciplining his woman because she understands that her eagerness to be pleasing, her

submissive posture, quiet obedience and exposed vulnerability will combine with the energy he exerts in her chastisement to increase his desire to further his domination of her. Accordingly she does not comfort herself when he desists from his steady tattoo upon her feminine form for she knows that her man has not yet brought his task of discipline to a satisfying conclusion and she dare not rise nor massage her stinging pelt for fear of inducing his genuine displeasure. Behind her she hears him disrobe but she does not turn her gaze to enjoy the sight of his emergence for she is well aware that what will soon follow is not intended for her own relief. Indeed she knows that her man has, at this moment, no intention of providing her with tender and romantic sensual gratification and the only concession he will make to her comfort is the lubricant that he applies first to himself and then lovingly, if a little roughly, to the quivering yet receptive recess through which he will reassert his dominion within her. She knows that his entrance will likely be forceful and possibly intended to impart both humiliation and soreness, yet she would have him complete her punishment no other way. Thus even as she anticipates the discomfort she yields, offering her womanly curves to him as an act of contrition, surrendered to the fulfilment of his passion, silently encouraging his admittance and bidding him welcome.¹²⁷

"A LIFETIME OF DENIAL ENDS" (6 JULY 2005)

I am 45 years old, happily married now for almost 23 years. When my husband and I first met in 1982, I was not a feminist but I was a very strong-willed woman. I had been raised by a father who was a very strong male role model, and I was a tomboy who liked playing with the boys. I had few girl friends, and was happier that way. Yet, I had these strange feelings: whenever I was with a boyfriend as a teenager, I wanted to be dominated by them, but only if I truly cared for them. I couldn't understand these feelings, especially since 1970s feminism back then told girls and women that if we had these feelings, we should "recognize" them as the products of an abusive childhood, or training from a patriarchal society, or stemming from low self esteem. I knew in my heart that none of those reasons were true, yet I stayed in the closet.

When I was older (late teens), I discovered BDSM. I think I found in the D/S part of BDSM the male dominance/female submission I was looking for, yet still in some ways even D/S left me unfulfilled. Perhaps because I was meeting more male subs than female ones, and most BDSMers seemed to me to be feminist in thinking, and saw D/S only as a "scene", something to do temporarily in the bedroom, and put away when you go back into the real world. At that time I did not yet know of 24/7 D/S relationships, but now that I do (thanks to the internet), that also, to me, does not seem

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to be what I am looking for. I am not against spanking (I love it actually), but I want it to be done by a man who truly loves me, and is doing it only for my own good. I did not always get this feeling from D/S. I wanted, and want now, a kind, dominant male whom I love, to take me in hand, do what is good for me, discipline me when I require it, overpower me, ravish me, seduce me, "take" me!

My exposure to BDSM in the 1970s was brief, mostly closeted. BDSM was not yet out in the open then, as it is now. As the years went by, I slipped back into ordinary, non-BDSM experiences, never truly happy or content. My fantasies had to remain that: fantasies.

When I married, I was still closeted about my desires, and was still the strong-willed woman I'd always been, yet with these hidden, shameful (to me then) desires. It was not until 18 years after we'd been married that I got up the courage to come out to my husband about my desires (which back then I still labeled D/s), and it was due to a close male friend that I got up the courage to come out to my husband. I was so afraid—afraid he'd reject me, leave me, take the children for fear I was a freak. But he did none of those.

It took time, but he adjusted to my desires. Now that I have discovered Taken In Hand (which ironically I stumbled upon via a link from a D/S website I was browsing), I feel truly *complete*. I have now discovered that which I have searched for all my life. Ever since my teen years I have read *The Taming of the Shrew* over and over—that was my only

"erotica", if you will! I wanted so badly to be Kate, yet I felt no boy or man would be willing to be my Petruchio! Boys and men back then (and now) have been lied to, and told that women want a passive, feminist male. NO NO NO! As I like to say to people now, We want to *work* with an Alan Alda...but we want to *sleep* with a Yul Brynner!

We are still growing in our marriage, which is better now than it has ever been (and it was always good). Taken in Hand was *exactly* what I was looking for all these years. I was and am a *normal* woman after all! Feminism was wrong! I didn't need to go to BDSM to fulfill *normal* desires... all I had to do was be myself.¹²⁸

"FILMS WITH TAKEN IN HAND OVERTONES OR REFERENCES" (7 JULY 2005)

I'm perhaps a bit older than some of you, and there are films I grew up with that had some scenes that were heavily Taken In Hand. I remember watching them and feeling so filled with joy and a sense of pleasure watching them, and I want to turn you on to them, too.

One is *The King And I* with Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr (made in the 1950s). There is one scene in which the King explains his philosophy of women, and if you are a Taken In Hand woman you will be so turned on by it!

Another is *The Ten Commandments*, also with Yul Brynner (also made in the 1950s). There is a scene where he confronts his bride to be who does not want to marry him. I won't spoil

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it by repeating the dialogue (which I've had memorized all these years!), but you'll love it. It's what I have fantasized a man saying to me ever since I was little, and I never felt safe sharing this with anyone till now!

You will also enjoy the American TV series from the 1960s, *I Dream of Jeannie*, about a female genie who is released from her bottle by a US Air Force major. She is the humorous "brat", who calls him "Master" yet is always doing things to cause embarrassment for him. Cute show!

Another movie is *McLintock!*, with John Wayne. I grew up on this movie too, and there is a scene where he spanks his wife (it's a Western version of *The Taming of the Shrew*.)¹²⁹

"THE CROOKED PATH TO WHERE WE ARE" **(8 JULY 2005)**

Our Taken in Hand journey has not been a straight path. It has involved many twists and turns and sometime outright reversals and restarts. I guess it started with me realising, a couple of years ago, that I had a sexual interest in what I thought at the time was spanking. I was searching something completely non-related on the net and came across a fiction story on spanking. I think that story helped me to see that I had been thinking about spanking for really a long time but had never realised that it had any significance to my life really. I have for as long as I can remember created elaborate ongoing stories in my head that always involved some spanking in one way or another.

Perhaps it was age, entering my 30s left me feeling more secure to think about these things and wonder if it would be something my husband would be interested in. I had never even thought of my interest as sexual; maybe because I had carried around these images and characters for so long that I thought they were just interesting to me. The stories never contained any sex in them, just spanking of some kind. I worked up the courage to talk to my husband about it. He is a very sexually open minded person and he was quite happy to hear that I was interested in this thing that seemed "kinky". He had, until that point, always been the one to bring up new things to try sexually. Without hesitation he gave my wry smile and said he would be game to try spanking. Somehow or other I ended up over Mike's lap and he applying stinging slaps. We both laughed. It was hilarious and ridiculous at the same time.

The next day we talked about it and I told him that although I had been thinking about him all day that I really did not think that spanking was for me. He said that he too felt awkward. Spanking turned out to be quite a let down and not the emotional experience I had imagined it would be. So we dropped it for a while. That one spanking though sparked my interest in spanking in a sexual way. I could not get it out of my head. My husband was thrilled that I had this "secret" and he wanted to know what other secrets I had up my sleeve. This one spanking kind of opened up a period of sexual awakening and exploration for us.

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Mike travels a lot on his job and we spent a lot of the time he was away instant messaging with one another. We would research different sites, many of them porn, exploring what we liked and disliked about what we saw. It was a very exciting time for us. We would send each other spanking gifs and other kinds of images that we found funny or interesting. It was during this exploration that I came across a DD site while looking for stuff on spanking.

I was blown away and realised immediately that spanking was not really what I was interested in but in discipline. All those stories I made up I realised included spanking, yes, but more importantly included discipline spanking. It never occurred to me that a husband might spank a wife for discipline in real life. That thought had never crossed my mind. Here was an entire site dedicated to just that very idea. So I had to work up the courage to discuss this with Mike. I knew he would be open to spanking, but discipline was going to seem just crazy to him. It was. He was both shocked and amazed that I was interested in this idea. He asked to see the site I was reading. This led to much more discussion. He was unsure. He proposed a test drive, so to speak. Whether or not he could actually give me a real spanking was in serious question and would I ever submit to one, another. He proposed that he give me a task to do before he came home and if I did not do it he would spank me. He suggested he would give me a 10 minute spanking or some such thing. He said that once I agreed there was no turning back and he would go

through with it no matter what. He gave me a day or two to think about it and I freaked emotionally and for reasons I still do not understand I said no.

I think it was too game like. I still was interested and did more research and we talked some more and decided to give it a go. I think at the beginning it was a game for Mike. It took him time to realise that yes I was really interested in this. I think he kept waiting for the other shoe to drop. All along the way we have changed and evolved. We have had many heated discussions and many cuddly romantic ones too. Mike has always insisted that we take things slowly so that if we do make a mistake it would less likely be a major one. I guess over time Mike has grown comfortable with his role as head of the household and he wears an easy confidence with it most of the time. I am sure we will continue to evolve and change. One thing is for sure: this crazy journey has changed us for ever; we have seen each other in a light we will be unable to unsee. It has been well worth it and I think even if we came to a point where we had decided that Taken In Hand was not truly for us, the journey to that point would have been well worth it.¹³⁰

"SUBLIMATED DESIRES" (9 JULY 2005)

I grew up in the late 1960s and 1970s, a time when many feminists seemed anti-male and brazenly so. I remember the bra-burning episodes, the SCUM Manifesto (society for

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cutting up men) of Valerie Solanis, the "I am a castrating bitch" pins, the slogan, "A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle", the Take Back The Night marches that men were excluded from on the grounds that "all men are rapists". In short, I experienced feminism at its most raw and ugly.

Many women have felt intimidated and pressured by some of the hateful material coming out of some parts of the feminist movement. What were they to think when they read books arguing that if a woman fantasizes about being dominated by a man she loves, she is sick, has low self-esteem, is brainwashed by a male-dominated patriarchy? Whether or not women read such material, the idea that we should all be equal in our intimate relationships seeped through into mainstream culture and made it unsafe for women to admit to such desires.

Many women have tried to convince themselves that they are dominant or "equal" to men, while in their hearts, they dream of living under the authority of a man. Some women have fought their deep desires so strongly that they have *protested too much*, demanded their rights stridently—as much to convince themselves as to convince men. This has not been conducive to good relationships between men and women in the last 30 years or more.

Feminists are often very well-intentioned. Many are in favour of real choice. There are a number of feminists writing wonderful articles and comments on this site. And feminism is not the only force that has had damaging effects on intimate

relationships. But for whatever reasons, relationships have been damaged. Intimate connections are weaker. Attraction between man and wife has decreased. And many men have become afraid of women, angry and bitter. Many men feel deeply resentful towards women yet still want and need female companionship. Some men are now denying this need just as vigorously as many women have denied their need for a man.

I've always been grateful that I was not the typical female, in that mostly all of my close friends were and are men. I was never "one of the girls", I never took part in hen parties, slumber parties, or any of that. I always found what most girls talked about to be boring and nonsensical. It's a good thing, or I might have been fully sucked into the "equality at all costs [even at the cost of denying our deep need to submit to a man]" that so many other women were sucked into. As it was, I did get affected by this to a small degree; it was hard not to, in this society. But, it could have been much worse. Maybe this is why I see things as I do, and why I say things that other women are too afraid to say (apart from women here on Taken In Hand).

Some would say I am a doormat female with low self-esteem, needing to get my identity from a man. For the record, I spent much of my childhood as a tomboy. In many ways, I still am one. I control the family television during the Tour De France each July, so as not to miss any of it. I loved to play baseball as a kid—I am very competitive and

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driven in playing sports. I almost let myself get run over by a car while racing my teenage son cycling recently. All that mattered to me was that I *win*. Does that sound like a weak-minded doormat of a woman to you? Me neither.

I also have a lot of opinions and a big mouth, and I know how to use it when I think I need to! Nope, no passive doormat here! My Dad would never have raised a doormat. I am a very dominant woman, but I am assertive enough to know what I really want, and I go get it. And nothing pleases me more than to sweetly surrender in the arms of my husband, to be taken by him, to have him above me, taking his pleasure with me. It is something I dream about even when he is not here. Does that mean I'm "weak"? "Brainwashed"? No! It means I am a strong woman who has the guts to know what she wants, and seeks to get it. So why have I been castigated by feminists again and again?

Under societal pressure to prefer an "equal" relationship, many women have turned to fantasy, female erotica and BDSM in order to get their fix of control by a man. I myself was drawn to BDSM when I was a teenager for that reason. At the time I just figured it was because I was kinky. I see things much more clearly now. A lot of the fetishism and extreme elements of the BDSM scene turned me off; I found myself drawn primarily to the D/s aspect, of male domination/female submission, and spanking. But not being submissive to just *any* male—it has to be a male I love, trust and admire. Is that kinky? Or is it just being normal?

Who can say any more, now that so many women have denied themselves the pleasure of the kind of relationship they would really prefer.

BDSM is safe because the movement falls over itself trying to prove itself non-sexist and pansexual. Many practitioners stress repeatedly that once the bedroom door is opened, the partners are fully equal. There has been a massive explosion of interest in BDSM, and especially BDSM erotica books geared to women (almost all of which is male dominant/female submissive) with companies like Blue Moon, Nexus (UK) and Black Lace (UK) springing up in the last 30 years. Many women who have been pressured into believing that they "really don't want" male domination, and many women who don't want to be judged by their female peers as being weak, outwardly act aggressive, feminist, superior, etc., but in secret, they indulge in the world of BDSM male domination erotica, precisely because it is a safe (politically correct, non-taboo-violating) way of getting their fix. If a desire is suppressed in one area, it *will* emerge elsewhere.

If such women could admit to themselves what they really want, there would be no need to seek dark corners for such fulfillment. They could be getting it from their own husbands! Taken In Hand may not be to every woman's taste, but I wouldn't be surprised if a great many more women find it to their taste than know about it now.

I truly believe the attitudes and intimidation I have mentioned above have destroyed the male-female

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connection. Fortunately there are some who have the courage to speak out. For a long time, I thought I was the only one, until I found the Taken In Hand website. Until I stumbled upon Taken In Hand I truly thought maybe I was bonkers! Not that I would have cared, since I've always been very individualistic and non-conformist in my thinking, but it does help to know that I'm not the only woman who feels this way.¹³¹

"KEEP YOUR SENSE OF HUMOUR!" (9 JULY 2005)

I don't remember much humour when I was first married to my husband. My most vivid memories are of him shouting at me because something I'd done, or hadn't done, had annoyed him, while I reacted with angry resentment or sullen indifference, and spent less and less time at home as I sought more congenial company. Being a self-centred person, I never tried to see things from his point of view, and his attitude did not encourage me to.

After a divorce, a reconciliation, and another very stormy period, things started to settle down between us a bit. I first realised things were improving in 1990, when we spent a fortnight's holiday in a caravan in the Scottish Highlands without having a single row (and it was raining a lot of the time). Since then things have continued to improve slowly, with fewer rows and more tolerance for each other.

This process was dramatically accelerated a year ago when we started having a Taken In Hand relation-

ship. Since then we've not had one single row, and we seem to like each other much better than we did. Things that used to cause my husband to explode in fury now provoke a reaction of mild exasperation tinged with amusement. For instance, there was the awkward conversation that occurred when he returned from a recent trip to America to find that the 3rd son had dug a large hole in the middle of the garden. When he enquired of me why I had allowed our son to do this, my reply "Because he wanted to" was not for some reason considered satisfactory, but did not provoke the fury it might once have done, instead he almost looked as if he was trying not to laugh.

And then there was the awkwardness over the bubble gum traces found on the carpet. His ominous inquiry "How many times have I told you not to buy the children bubble gum?" was met with a very weak response "I didn't know it was bubble gum when they chose it, it didn't look like bubble gum" "Is that true?" he asked, fixing with a gimlet eye. "No" I admitted, wilting under his penetrating stare. He shook his head sadly "What am I going to do with you?" he enquired rhetorically (both of us knew the answer to that one already). But he wasn't angry, and neither was I.

He can make me laugh under the most unlikely circumstances. There was the incident a few weeks ago when we had bought a new table, and he said I could go on ebay to look for tablemats, as he didn't want the table to get scratched. "You are not to look at anything except

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tablemats" he said. But, of course, one thing led to another and I duly found myself contemplating the workshop floor while he explained to me the error of my ways, with the help of the dreaded wooden paddle. "But you said I could go on ebay to look for tablemats" I whimpered. "Yes," he retorted, delivering a volley of hard whacks to the most sensitive area "But "tablemats" are not spelled "Barbie"!" I burst out laughing in spite of being in extreme physical pain.

Things that used to cause so much anger and misery between us now just seem to cause amusement, even laughter. All that anguish seems to be in the past. We laugh when once we cried. Taken In Hand seems to have dissolved all the barriers we used to have between us.¹³²

"THE MISSIONARY POSITION" (10 JULY 2005)

The missionary position appeals to many Taken In Hand women for the same reason some other women thoroughly dislike it: because the man-on-top is the male-superior position. That has been deemed by some women to be humiliating subjugation of a woman. Some women want to be on top because that is a less vulnerable position—one from which they can easily escape. In the female-superior position they can also (*prima facie*) call the shots, dominate, and, in some cases, sublimate their Basic Instinct fantasies in a bit of face-slapping, erotic or not so erotic asphyxiation and other such

acts of revenge against masculine power.

The Taken In Hand woman has no such inner conflict about the idea of masculine power. Indeed, she is as drawn to it as some women are repulsed by it. And instead of fighting it, she finds it erotic, fun, a source of deep joy and contentment. And yes, for many a Taken In Hand woman, lying on her back, exposed, vulnerable, receptive, trusting him, there for him, accepting him, accepting his authority, accepting his power as a man, accepting his dominance, being pinned under her man's imprisoning weight, unable to escape until he allows it, looking up at him with soft submissive eyes as he enters her in the male-superior position—the missionary position—feels physically and psychologically *right*. Soothing. Feminine. Woman *qua* woman, as Ayn Rand might say. It is no coincidence that Nancy Friday called the book in which she sought to prove that women's sexual fantasies are now dominant, *Women on Top*.

This is not to denigrate other positions or other preferences, merely to explain why some Taken In Hand folk might feel especially delighted by the much-maligned missionary position. (Taken In Hand folk might well love other positions too, but this is just about this particular position. And I certainly do not mean to imply that a Taken In Hand woman would only adopt her preferred positions. No doubt the right man could subject a Taken In Hand woman to any number of positions without any problem!) There may well be other reasons for the appeal of the missionary position, such as

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more mechanical/physical ones, and perhaps there might be a (biological?!) tendency to prefer it because it might increase the chance of impregnation, but here let's stick to discussion of the more obvious psychological reasons for its appeal.

When a Taken In Hand woman knows that her man is going to *take* her, she responds. Her body and soul are receptive, thrilled, wanting and welcoming her man. Ecstatic. In this one moment, she may go from feeling tired, stressed, distracted, or grumpy, to craving her man with an unparalleled intensity. No need for hours of the dreaded "foreplay" here! (Just the word "foreplay" is enough to give me a headache, and I'm a woman so goodness knows how tedious it must sound to a man!) When a man takes his woman, he takes possession of her. He acts, he dominates, he penetrates. And when he does, his Taken In Hand woman accepts, submits, receives.

The missionary position is, or can be, a natural, clear and easy expression of male dominance and female acceptance of that dominance. The woman is literally under him just as she is under his authority. It is not a position in which many Taken In Hand women would fear they were being put in the dominant position. It is not a position requiring a lot of elaborate effort for the couple to feel the masculine-feminine polarity, the man's power, and the willing surrender to that power by the woman. It is a position in which a woman can easily experience her man as being very manly, masterful, in control. And it is a position in which a

man can experience his woman as being very feminine, vulnerable, soft and submissive.

How can so many couples manage to experience the missionary position as boring, unadventurous and anything but erotic? OK, don't answer that off-topic rhetorical question!¹³³

"FOREPLAY" (11 JULY 2005)

When I wrote† that the idea of foreplay is enough to give me a headache, so I dread to think how tedious it must sound to a man, I was not talking about general kissing, cuddling and caressing enjoyed for its own sake, I was referring to what is often called "foreplay" in at least some literature on sexual dysfunction—that soulless, dreary, mechanical list of things the man is to do to the woman physically in order to "*get her in the mood*".

Imagine a man who has a one-size-fits-all formulaic approach that is not affected by details like what the woman he is with might enjoy. He may well be doing his best, and he may well think that the woman would like the routine formula of physical foreplay acts he does, but the routine is just that: a formulaic routine. Different men have different routines, but they are amazingly predictable, and not all of that is

* [EDITOR'S NOTE: My delicate sensibilities and prudish heart would very much appreciate responses phrased without getting explicit or graphic.]

† "The Missionary Position," 10 July 2005.

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because women all like the same things. Rather than kissing and touching, etc., because they want to and because the woman enjoys it, some men actually mentally switch off while they go through the routine.

What I am referring to as foreplay is often consciously seen as foreplay by the man who is doing it, as opposed to kissing and touching and so on because that is delightful for both persons. He is doing it because that is what he has to do to get what he wants, rather than experiencing it as being enjoyable in itself. It is half-hearted rather than wholehearted. It is a list of instructions he follows. A formula. A single recipe he never varies.

There is nothing interesting, exciting or unique to that individual or to their relationship in this list of instructions. It completely ignores the role of the mind in sexual desire and arousal. It is a formulaic and deeply unerotic mechanical instruction-book approach.

I have nothing against others enjoying what is traditionally referred to as foreplay, but it is unlikely that this approach I have described would be appealing to many women, because it is so very impersonal and so little affected by what the particular woman might enjoy.

There are many women for whom, if they are not in the mood, no amount of this physical activity will get them in the mood. But a look, a word, or a suggestion might well. As might being *taken* by the man you love. We could call the look, the word, or the suggestion “foreplay” too, but that is not what I meant

when I said that the idea of “foreplay” gives me a headache. I was referring to the disconnected, psychologically blind, predictable and impersonal physical routine a man can do while thinking about the latest rugby match or what might be causing the rattling noise in the car.

It is simply untrue that all women need half an hour of physical foreplay, and for those who dislike psychologically disconnected interactions, that kind of routine is likely to be actively counterproductive. By contrast, connected interactions that arise out of the unique relationship between the two unique individuals, are much more likely to be exciting. And in some cases, a mere word or a look is all it takes. The key is that it is highly personal and connected as opposed to an impersonal, standard, and disconnected routine.

There is an excellent book that goes into the psychology of desire and arousal and peak sexual experiences and fantasies. It is: *The Erotic Mind*, by Jack Morin.¹³⁴

“EQUALITY THROUGH TAKEN IN HAND?” (12 JULY 2005)

This is the last thing I'd ever thought I'd be saying, but, ever since my husband and I consciously adopted the Taken In Hand philosophy, it seems he is treating me better, and strangely, more as an equal. Am I imagining this?

For years we fought a lot, because I always tried to rule the roost, be the dominant one, because I felt afraid to let the real me show. I don't know *why* I was afraid, I certainly

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didn't care what other women thought of me, so why was I so afraid? Did I think if I let the real me show, I'd be seen as weak? I've always been a strong-willed woman; I was a tomboy; I equated strength with not showing my true feelings. But now that I have shown my true feelings, I feel.... STRONGER! What a paradox, yet it seems to be true!

And my husband said to me as he left for work this morning, "I was in love with you when we first met, but for many years, due to all the arguing, etc., I still loved you but was not IN love with you. I'm IN love with you all over again, it feels like when we first met."

And I notice he goes out of his way to help me with little things, that he overlooked before.

This is so odd, because Taken In Hand (if you listen to society) is supposed to make a woman feel weak. But I feel stronger than ever!¹³⁵

"FEELING THRILLED BY THE PROSPECT OF BEING TAKEN IN HAND" (13 JULY 2005)

Yesterday, my husband bought me a mobile phone. "I want to be able to check where you are and what you're up to," he said. "And I want you to be able to call me if there's an emergency." He looked at me as he said this and I looked back at him. He didn't actually mention the words "Hampton Court", but I knew he was thinking them.

He knows full well that I loathe all telephones, and mobile phones in particular. I have always set my face resolutely against having one. So

what did I say when he looked at me like that, did I tell him to go and take a running jump, and that I was having no truck with mobiles whatsoever. No I did not. "Yes, dear" I said meekly, my defiance ebbing away under his steely gaze. He took me into town forthwith and bought me one. "Keep it with you, and keep it switched on" he said. "Yes, dear" I said.

My objections died in the heat of his certainty that I would have a phone whether I liked it or not. "You take it with you when you go out, and if you leave it at home you are in Big Trouble—trouble with a capital "S"" he told me.

I slightly despise myself for being this way, but I absolutely adore it when he is firm like this and overcomes my resistance.

If I were a normal person I would probably resent being told I'd be in trouble if I forget to take my mobile phone with me. Being the way I am though, I get a pleasurable thrill from the prospect of getting in trouble if I do forget the phone!

I am frequently punished for having forgotten to do this or that, but I don't resent it, because it's preferable to what might have happened in the pre-Taken In Hand days, which was him being sarcastic or losing his temper and shouting at me about whatever it is. Nowadays his reaction to my having forgotten to do something is more likely to be slightly stern but amused "How many times have I told you not to...." whatever it is, rather than irritation. And I find myself meekly saying "I'm sorry" instead of flouncing out of the room in a self-pitying sulk.

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I know being punished for forgetfulness seems highly unreasonable, but it mysteriously puts both of us in a better humour.

Sometimes I almost succumb to the temptation to “forget” something on purpose, for the pleasure of getting that reaction. The other day I'd gone out to get something from the car, and I was about to lock it again when I hesitated, contemplating pleasureably what the reaction of my HRH (Highly Respected Husband) would be if he went out and found it unlocked. Then common sense reasserted itself and I considered what his reaction would be likely to be if he went out there and found the car gone. Not so much fun. Anyway, it would be cheating. God knows I don't need to forget things on purpose, it happens often enough naturally.¹³⁶

“WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG, GROWLY LION?” (14 JULY 2005)

She is his prey. She knows it. And that knowledge causes a fear to run through her that scintillates. Delicious in the way it makes her heart race, and her breath come in gasps. She will run, fight, do all that she can to resist. But still he will claim her.

She is his woman. And he is a man. Her man.

And the fear that passes through her like a current, causing her muscles to tremble, arises from this.

It is not something of darkness. She knows he would die before he ever hurt her. Indeed, he would die for her. And that she knew, was the

defining difference between that fear, which in terror and abuse, stole life away. And the fear which, gave to her, life.

Of all the things he was, loving, funny, sensitive and perceptive.

Sometimes unnervingly and amazingly so. He was also an animal. One who growled. Who roared. One, who brought out the animal in her. The one that ached to fight, to run. As much as she ached to be taken, claimed, owned. It was there, predator and prey. She would fight, and he would prove his strength, his worthiness. For she could not know submission before a lesser man. That animal within him was resolute. It would never let her pull away. It would always fight with its all to protect them. And it would have what it owned.

Who was afraid of the big, growly Lion? She was. And she wouldn't have it any other way.¹³⁷

“THE WORD ‘ANAH’ IN BRIEF” (15 JULY 2005)

Biblical Hebrew says a great deal indeed, despite a very small formal vocabulary.* It does so because its terms are word-pictures of specific experiences in actual life. Abstract senses are derived from these by extension. Just as in English, these can be remote indeed from root

* **Footnotes:** Although it drives people absolutely frantic, one searches the exhaustive and detailed catalogue of prohibited degrees in Leviticus 18 in vain for any prohibition of father-daughter relations.

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senses (bridal shower, in a pickle), but this changes nothing essential. Once the fundamental sense of a word is intuited (and verified by following it through its various appearances in the text), one gains an insight not only into the intrinsic sense of the scriptures themselves, but into the mentality and sense of life of the people whose experiences they comprised as well.

Some of the experiences and behaviours taken for granted as normal in this older world come as shocking surprises. Yet these, on reflection, touch something in us which, however inchoately, senses that there is more to what (and how) we might be than the dreary life of the "reasonable man," sanctioned by court and pulpit, who never becomes upset or displays passion, no matter what the provocation.

Very little of this comes across in English translations, by design. From the beginning, these were done, on the whole, with a view to translating-away or otherwise disguising the blunt impacts they make when forthrightly presented. And the more religion became a state-sanctioned exercise with the creation and molding of public opinion as one of its major functions, the further it retreated into over-refined unreality. By the late nineteenth century, this had reached such extremes that one Archbishop of Canterbury famously remarked in a moment of whimsy that why anyone should have troubled to crucify the Jesus of Protestant Christianity would forever be a mystery to him.

Yet even in English, some idea of the gulf which separates the mentali-

ty cultivated around this from the God of the scriptures who warns his faithless wife (in Ezekiel 16: 37-8) that, if she doesn't mend her ways, he will drag her out into the street, yank her skirts up over her head and give her the hiding of her life while her paramours stand around looking on and laughing at her, is more than apparent.

Letting the cat out of the bag all at once will be unsettling to anyone, however prepared for it through general empathy with the Taken-in-Hand phenomena (plural). Yet it is the easiest way, on balance. This can be done by considering one word alone, "anah." By the time the root sense of this has been grasped, even in the small number of the many passages in which it appears that we shall consider, the rest of the picture can easily be completed by anyone interested to pursue it, and with the simplest of tools (a *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available cheaply anywhere, and an older Authorized or "King James" Bible). One should note, however, that this is a matter deep as well as broad.

"**Anah**" has provoked a great deal of embarrassed dissembling. Generally, the lexicographers have made two separate words out of it, and presented both as if their more remotely derivative senses were primary. In Strong's Concordance, it is listed as word numbers 6030 and 6031 (with the parenthetical admission that these may be the same word after all). Various fundamental senses of this (from Strong's and the more elaborate Gesenius Lexicon) are: Heed, pay attention, respond (appropriately and affectionately),

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afflict(ion), chasten(ing), cry out, answer, humble (self), submit, and (to be very nice about it), "having to do with the matter of intimate relations from which pregnancy is not an anatomically possible outcome."

These will be easily recognized by anyone with a taken-in-hand orientation and even a passing acquaintance with the topic in scripture as variations on a single theme: a bare(d) bottom—either in and of itself, or as a means to an end. Every one of the above definitions are particular aspects of the fundamental image—extensions of it into specific contexts.

I.e. Paying heed. Is failure to take instructions or admonitions seriously a precipitating factor in correction? Is better appreciating their importance an outcome of it?

Responding. Both failure (worse, refusal) to respond in an acceptable manner can certainly trigger correction; responding in an disrespectful manner all but guarantees it.

The connection with, and relevance of Chastening, and Crying Out will need no detailed explanation here.

Answer. An answer is, of course, a Response (see above).

Humble. For one thing, the opposite of pride and arrogance. Also sometimes translated as "Meek." (Yes, as in "The meek shall inherit the earth," "Blessed are the humble" and so on). Strange and wonderful it is, the way humility begins to appear as preparations for correction are underway, even before the process of transformation has fairly begun.

Submit. This, paradoxically, both begins and concludes the process.

And the other bit? Several scriptural examples of it will be considered towards the conclusion.

Let us proceed to cases, then.

For a case in point, Proverbs 29:19

A servant will not be corrected by words; For though (s)he understands, (s)he will not *answer*

"answer" (above) being *anah*.

To come to grips with this, note that Hebrew, like English, uses the masculine gender to collectively subsume both sexes, and that ancient society operated on different assumptions than ours. A servant might be a slave (owned outright) or a bondservant, destined to return to freedom after a period of service. But in either case, servants were members of the family, and treated as such. They ate the Passover as members of the family, and were subject to correction likewise.

The key variable here was intimacy. Quarters in houses being small and crowded (to say nothing of tents), privacy was essentially unknown. Relations with servants were intimate ones, characterized (in the main) by reciprocal affection.

In stark contrast to this stood the hireling, with whom any possible intimacy was ruled-out by the arm's-length, contractual predication of his relationship. The hireling was an outsider; the servant an insider, and this was the matter in a nutshell. A servant could be, and often was, loved and esteemed; a hireling, never (a situation which obtained in Rome, Greece and everywhere else,

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for that matter). One had dealings with hired help only when this was unavoidable. (In other words, for all practical purposes—especially as maidservants were concerned—matters stood exactly then as they did in 18th and, even, 19th century Britain).

To be specific then, A servant girl (let us say) will not be corrected by words (alone); for though she understand (well enough what it is about her attitude you want her to change), there is not likely to be any meaningful change in her which will *answer* (above) to your expectations unless (recalling the essential idea-picture) a more vivid impression is effected than words alone can make. And notice, while we are on it, the elegant economy with which the solution (by implication) is contained within the elucidation of the problem.

Can this really have been the case? Absolutely. Consider the matter of Sarai and her handmaid Hagar in Genesis 16. Because of her infertility, Sarai gives Hagar to Abram as her surrogate. Discovering that she is indeed expecting a child by him, Hagar becomes vain, looking down her nose at her mistress. Hagar complains of this to Abram, who tells her (v.6)

Behold, your maid is in your hand (i.e., under your control)—do to her as seems right to you. So then Sarai *dealt harshly with (anah)* her, and she fled from her judgement).

Flavius Josephus, in his *Antiquities*, notes that she fled as being “unable to endure the instances [note the

plural] of Sarai’s severity towards her.” This was no one-time event, but a protracted process.

This is far from the end of the matter, however. Fleeing into the wilderness, she encounters the Angel of the Lord, who tells her to return to her mistress and *submit herself (anah)* under Sarai’s hands—as explicit a picture as could be required by anyone as to what was involved: Return, lie back down, uncover yourself and resume where you left off. (Odd—is it not—that “oneself” comes so naturally for that part of us ordinarily kept under wraps?)

Generally overlooked here is the connection here with Hebrews 12:11

No correction is pleasant, but grievous. Nevertheless, it yields, as a consequence, the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are trained by it

which is exactly the case here. Hagar returns, bares her bottom, and receives Sarai’s correction in a spirit of acceptance. In consequence she bears little Ishmael, the peaceable fruit of her righteousness (right-doing) whose name (the first ever bestowed by an Angel, incidentally) means both “God Hears Man” and “Man Beloved by God.”

At the risk of dallying over this, notice that Hebrews states that the Angel of the Lord in the wilderness was Christ himself. This being so, the stripes he prescribes to her are type-setting examples of “his stripes” (i.e., the stripes which he prescribes as penance), with or through which we are healed, as

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Hagar was in the type-setting example.

Again, there is nothing far-fetched to such a construal. If proof be required, consider the First Epistle of Clement:

Brothers, the reproof and correction we exercise, one towards another is good and exceedingly profitable, for it unites us the more closely with the will of God.

It has only been with difficulty that this has been all but erased from the lives of contemporary people, who find themselves a bit adrift without it.

But we have not so far touched upon the area of affliction. Affliction, as it figures in scripture, comes under two headings. The key variable is whether the Lord deigns to witness it or not. If not, it is of no more consequence or deep significance than the brawling of drunks in the street. Provided he consents to be cognisant of it, however, affliction has several possible consequences:

- 1) Superabounding fertility.
- 2) Greatly increased love, prosperity, or both.
- 3) Protection from harm.

One can see the first in the paradox of Israel in Egypt (Exodus 1:12)

But the more [the Egyptians] afflicted them, the more [Israel] multiplied and grew. And, earlier, Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 41:52)

And the name of [his] second [son] he called "Ephraim": For God has caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.

Number two is exemplified by Leah (Genesis 29:32)

And Leah conceived [yet again] and bore a son, and she called his name "Reuben": for she said, "Surely the LORD has looked upon my affliction; now, on this account, my husband will love me.

Number three is explained by Jacob to Laban (Genesis 31:42)

Except the God of my father . . . had been with me, you surely would have sent me away empty. But God has seen my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked thee last night [when you were pursuing me].

All of these, as with Job, are in the nature of "happily ever after" conclusions, after the fact of affliction / humbling. Deuteronomy 8 sums this up –

And you shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to *humble* [*anah*] you—to try you; to see what was in your heart: whether you would obey his instructions or not ... You shall consider in your heart that, as a man corrects his child, so the Lord your God corrects you.

Having established, then, that this is not some idle fancy that we are pursuing, spun out of a few ambiguous passages, but a matter of demonstrable fact, rather than pile example upon example (easily enough done), let us turn to the interface of *anah* with overt sexuality (as in "Alternative therapy").

Heterosexual intercourse (let us be precise here) "in a manner contrary to nature" (as Aquinas viewed it

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anyhow) was a universal practice in the ancient world. Having been the only pre-technological form of birth control, this should hardly be surprising. This also is subsumed within the basic *anah* word picture—human nature being as it is, it would be surprising would be if it weren't. (One thing does, after all, tend to lead to another, and "it isn't for nothing that a heart looks like a bum").

We can begin here with *the Law of the Beautiful Captive in Time of War* (in Deuteronomy 21:10) Put succinctly (and as exegesised by Moses Maimonides in his *Guide for the Perplexed*): if a soldier on campaign finds a beautiful girl he wants for his own in enemy territory, he must take her (i.e., establish possession of her by penetration in the manner we are considering) in a secluded place (i.e., not make a spectacle of it). (The sense of this cannot possibly be "home to his house," as an army under such a requirement would simply melt away to nothing within a week). After a month's time spent getting to know one another, if they don't get on, he must let her go free—he may not sell her to another because he has *humbled her (anah)*—bared her bottom (a necessary preliminary to taking her in the prescribed manner) which, perhaps curiously, gives her rights of her own she would not otherwise have had.

Similarly (and also in Deuteronomy, 22:28-9) if a man humbles a girl who is not betrothed (whether he corrects her, enjoys her, or both) he has thereby married her for life, without any possibility of divorce.

I.e., only her lawful head (her father or husband) has the right to use her so¹; having usurped this role, he has thereby made himself her head in a sign, and is thereafter stuck with the consequence of having done so.

For a third example (three will suffice, I expect) there is the Affair of Dinah and Shechem in Genesis 34. Shechem, a prince of that country takes Dinah (the daughter of Jacob) and, as elucidated by Bereshith Rabbah (the oldest intact commentary on Genesis)

laid with her [in the usual manner] and humbled (*anah*) her [in a manner contrary to nature]

(scripture does not recount that she objected to this very strenuously — if at all).¹³⁸

"LOVE IS A DECISION, BY GARY SMALLEY: A BOOK REVIEW" (15 JULY 2005)

An excellent book I'd recommend to all married couples is Gary Smalley's *Love Is A Decision*. He claims that love is a verb, not an emotion. That tingling feeling you got when you were dating or newlyweds was hormones. True love comes from what you do. When the typical "honeymoon" period is over, and the body's juices stop flowing when you look at the one you've vowed to love, honor, and cherish until death, that does NOT signify the end of a relationship, but rather the beginning.

I remember hearing Gary Smalley talk about his book on the radio one time, and share some of the success

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stories from married couples to followed his advice.

One woman was married to an alcoholic. She wasn't sure she even still loved him, as his self-destructive behavior was affecting their whole family. She wanted a divorce. After counseling with Gary, she decided to ACT as though she still loved him. She LISTENED to him when he talked. She cooked for him, kept house, stopped nagging... don't remember what all else she did. And for weeks, even months, her husband was just taking all she had to give. But then one day he walked in to Gary's office and said, "I just love my wife so much. Whatever you told her, I don't know, but she has just been giving me so much. I feel special. And I want to do something for her, to show her how much it means to me. What can I do?" And Gary told him to get help with his alcoholism. And he did.

That story made me cry, and I was driving the car! I felt like such a fool, my eyes spilling all down my face, my nose too (I can never cry "pretty" like the actors do on TV), and all because of some soppy story on the radio! But the old adage, you can catch more flies with honey than vinegar, sure holds true today!¹³⁹

"DOMINANT MEN: D/s VS. TAKEN IN HAND" (16 JULY 2005)

There is often a huge difference in the way of thinking and behaving between men who embrace a D/s philosophy vs. men who embrace a Taken In Hand philosophy. Having been exposed to both types of mind-

sets and behaviors, I have been able to experience and observe my own reactions as a "submissive" woman to these differences.

My experience has been that men in D/s relationships are often terribly focused on and obsessed about their own needs. It's as though they are attracted to a submissive woman because they think they can train her to be exactly what they want. And what they want is mainly a servant whose life revolves around the man and his whims. They want total submission for the most self-serving of reasons, and they are not especially interested in what the woman wants. Of course, this is not true of all such men, but I've seen this far too many times.

For me, it just doesn't work. I cannot be "trained" like some animal or pet to be fit into some kind of mould. I am a passionate, caring and warm human being. I need to be cared for and nurtured. I need to feel loved and appreciated. Any discipline needs to be for my good and the good of the relationship in general.

This is where Taken In Hand comes in. Taken In Hand is about both people, not just the man. It stresses mutual enjoyment and pleasure rather than being all about the man's pleasure. It's not about rules, protocols, "training", servile submission or slavish obedience. It's about two people caring about each other and creating a dynamic that works for both of them, that helps both of them to get their needs met, and it's more flexible. The Taken In Hand man nurtures, loves and appreciates his woman and always

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keeps the good of the relationship in mind, and this benefits him as well as the woman in the long run, because the relationship is better.

It's sort of sad that so many "dominant" men don't see this. In assuming that the woman is there primarily to serve the man, and thinking that they can just get what *they* want by enforcing it or micromanaging, they make it impossible for the woman to get her own needs met. This can stifle the woman's spirit. She can become weak, dependent and unhappy. In the long run, this will only become a burden to the man and probably cause the relationship to end.

Taken In Hand takes more work for the man than just thinking about himself and his own needs or enforcing a lot of rules because he is the boss or the "Dominant". It takes dedication, persistence and sensitivity. But the results are so worth it!

I've experienced the nurturing, considerate Taken In Hand dominance I described above, and know what type of response this sort of nurturing/guiding engenders. It causes me to be soft, caring, competent and happy in all areas of my life. I flourish. The Taken In Hand man has no need to fear that he will not receive everything for which he longs! I'm like putty in his hands! I find that I naturally endeavor to please him in any and all ways. He has my respect and devotion. I have no need to be owned, or kept on a leash. He has already won my heart, mind and soul!

Why settle for a fleeting, passing experience only to go to another similar pattern or cycle of interac-

tion? The Taken In Hand man will skillfully learn his woman's needs and minister unto her. Is it weak of him? NO! It takes a "knight in shining armor" to step up and master the course of a relationship. He needs to be discerning, wise and careful. He must be *able* to give and to love. That is never a weakness, it is the greatest strength one can possess.

As I said, I had it, in part. I know it exists. It may be hard to find. But the Taken In Hand dynamic really works.¹⁴⁰

"TOM JONES, BY HENRY FIELDING: AN EXCERPT" (17 JULY 2005)

Bill Wagner has drawn to my attention the following excerpt from Henry Fielding's 1749 classic, *Tom Jones*:

Black George was, in the main, a peaceable kind of fellow, and nothing choleric nor rash; yet he did bear about him something of what the ancients called the irascible, and which his wife, if she had been endowed with much wisdom, would have feared. He had long experienced, that when the storm grew very high, arguments were but wind, which served rather to increase, than abate it. He was therefore seldom unprovided with a small switch, a remedy of wonderful force, as he had often essayed, and which the word villain served as a hint for his applying.

No sooner, therefore, had this symptom appeared, than he had immediate recourse to the said remedy, which though, as it is usual in all very efficacious medicines, it at first seemed to heighten and inflame the

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disease, soon produced a total calm, and restored the patient to perfect ease and tranquility.

This is, however, a kind of horse-medicine, which requires a very robust constitution to digest, and is therefore proper only for the vulgar, unless in one single instance, viz., where superiority of birth breaks out; in which case, we should not think it very improperly applied by any husband whatever, if the application was not in itself so base, that, like certain applications of the physical kind which need not be mentioned, it so much degrades and contaminates the hand employed in it, that no gentleman should endure the thought of anything so low and detestable.

The whole family were soon reduced to a state of perfect quiet; for the virtue of this medicine, like that of electricity, is often communicated through one person to many others, who are not touched by the instrument. To say the truth, as they both operate by friction, it may be doubted whether there is not something analogous between them, of which Mr. Freke would do well to enquire, before he publishes the next edition of his book.

—from *Tom Jones* Book IV, Chapter IX¹⁴¹

"TAKING SEX DIFFERENCES SERIOUSLY, BY STEVEN E. RHOADS" (18 JULY 2005)

I just read *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*, by Steven E. Rhoads, and although it was interesting, as usual with such books I found everything too black and white to be convincing.

It has all the usual stuff about men being predatory sexual beasts while women are gentle creatures who need love and commitment and who

are invariably hurt by casual sex, and if a woman sleeps with a man before he's committed to her he won't stay with her etc. None of this relates to my own experience at all. When I was young, I quite often treated boyfriends quite badly; frequently I was the one who dumped them, not the other way around. I was often the one who didn't want to see a man again after sleeping with him once, while he was keen to see me again. And as for men not wanting to marry women they have slept with too soon, this does not apply to me either, since I usually slept with men on the first date, and quite often didn't even bother with the date, nevertheless some of them (including my present husband) did want to marry me. And women are supposed to love reading romance novels, so how does that explain someone like me, who can't stand them? Aren't people really more of a mixture than books like these will admit?

Steven E. Rhoads seems to have a somewhat rosy view of life in the past. His view of life in the fifties is of happy well-adjusted young people dating and then marrying, with nobody having any problems at all. A slightly less sunny picture of the 50s is given in Florence King's *He: An Irreverent Look at the American Male* in which she describes her own years at a co-educational college "My four years in a Penile Institution" as a seething hotbed of sexual tension, with young women obsessed with marriage and motherhood constantly terrified of losing the respect of men, worrying about going too far, not going far enough,

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and frantically counting on their fingers to work out the date of their last period. "Satisfying the boys was something we did with the utmost reluctance because we were all scared to death of semen. If it got on you, anywhere near you, you could get pregnant, it had happened. We cranked ourselves up into such a state of terror that we visualised each individual sperm cell as a grinning demon armed with pontoons, ladders, scaling hooks wire cutters, and an ability to incubate indefinitely in everything from wool to nylon tricot."

Steven Rhoads tells us that women are more interested in babies than men are—hardly a startling piece of news—and that most women are happier concentrating on their families than on careers. Men want wives who are young and beautiful, women want men who are successful and earn good money. This may be true of most people, but it doesn't explain a relationship like, for instance, my sister has. For the past 15 years she has lived with a man 23 years younger than she is, and who is utterly devoted to her. When she goes away he sleeps in a tent in the garden because he hates being in the house on his own. He doesn't have a career or any professional status at all, and my sister, though beautiful, will be 61 this year so is a bit short on youth. This is the main trouble with books like these, they talk about people as if they can all be tidily divided up into this and that "men are this, women are that" when a lot of people don't fit into these tidy classifications. Human

beings are more varied than Rhoads makes allowances for.

"Women respond more readily to babies cries", is a frequently-expressed opinion in this book, and I certainly agree with that for myself. I always hear the children crying before my husband does. Nevertheless, I have a certain admiration for women who are able to override this biological imperative.

And I do think it is true that women have more patience with children than men do. My husband is always happy to spend hours doing things with the children when it is something that interests him, helping them make things or showing them how things work, but he is much less willing to do things that they want to do but he doesn't. For instance, neither of us likes playing ball games, but if the children want someone to kick a ball around with the, it's always me who ends up doing it, he won't. But then, according to Steven Rhoads, men are far more interested in sport than women, so it ought to be he who wants to play ball with the children, but he doesn't. The only sport that interests him is sailing.

Women are supposed to be better at housework than men, but that's not true of me. Men are likely to be dissatisfied with women who don't do well at cooking, housework etc. Yes, I can identify with that; it's certainly true of my own marriage, but, all the same, other things have always mattered more to my husband than my lack of interest in housework. Can he really be unique in this respect? Are men really so obsessed with women being good housekeep-

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ers, and are women really so obsessed with men's earning power and professional status? Are human beings really as easy to classify, and as tidily compartmentalised, as Steven Rhoads seems to think? I am sceptical. Hormonal differences may explain some things, but they can't explain the infinite variety and complexity of human beings.¹⁴²

"I AM A STRONG WOMAN BUT I WANT TO BE TAKEN IN HAND. IS THIS NORMAL?" (18 JULY 2005)

I am a strong, competent, intelligent, well-educated woman with a good career and a powerful personality but I want to be taken in hand. Is this normal?

Yes, it is perfectly normal to be a strong woman who wants a Taken In Hand relationship. It is more unusual for a Taken In Hand woman *not* to be those things.* It is often the strongest, most powerful women who in their intimate relationships most want to be with an even stronger, more powerful man.¹⁴³

"NARCISSISTIC DOMINANCE VS TAKEN IN HAND DOMINANCE" (18 JULY 2005)

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **I am a strong, competent, intelligent, well-educated woman with a good career and a powerful personality but I want to be taken in hand. Is this normal?**]

Dominance is often viewed as an outward trait of competitiveness and imposition. Always having to have it your way is domineering not dominance. It is narcissistic and self-serving. However, this definition is how many define "dominant" so the selfish are often mistaken for dominant. Most miss the truly dominant man who quietly reveals himself when needed, then, when his influence is no longer required, he slips back into the crowd. The blowhard gains the attention, while the dominant man provides a quiet word, a supportive hand or, sometimes, a smack on the backside. He does not seek to control, only to guide. His concern is for others.

However, the narcissistic "dominant" man does apparently have an attraction. The Economist has an article[†] about a study where women were found to be attracted to narcissistic "dominant" men but only when in a relationship with someone else, and only when most fertile.

The traits used to define dominant men who are sadly narcissistic:

Deciding who is and is not a dominant male is the first question, of course. To do this, the researchers turned to one of the world's most widely used experimental animals, the hard-up male student. Their subjects were asked to rate such things as their tendency to correct others, to want to control conversations, and to surpass others' accomplishments, in a questionnaire designed to assess their

[†] See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20170324010217/http://www.economist.co-m/node/4149493>>

dominance. In their paper in *Biology Letters* the researchers laconically observe that dominance in this questionnaire “corresponds to the scale “Narcissism” in the widely used California psychological inventory.”

This study sought out individuals with traits generally regarded as dominant by society. However, to me the traits are not ones best suited for a Taken In Hand relationship. Perhaps what a Taken In Hand relationship needs is not a narcissistic “dominant” man but a leader. A leader corrects others only to keep them on track, promotes varied conversation to encourage growth and supports the accomplishment of others so that those he has taken into his charge surpass even him in their abilities. The leader is dominant in that he influences others but he doesn't seek to control them.

Society considers those who control others as dominant but they may only be domineering. A leader doesn't control others but may be dominant in that he influences the lives of others. A narcissistic “dominant” man creates a big scene to garner attention to his “dominance.” A leader dominates quietly, many times without ever being noticed. Ordering a woman to her knees draws the attention to the man and all his “power”, even if it is just she who notices. Guiding a woman to a place of contentment and affection where she kneels before him to enhance her feelings of surrender draws attention to the relationship and all its power, even if no one notices.¹⁴⁴

“HE: AN IRREVERENT LOOK AT THE AMERICAN MALE, BY FLORENCE KING: AN EXCERPT” (19 JULY 2005)

This is an excerpt from Florence King's *He: An Irreverent Look at the American Male*. Thanks to Louise for this:

Jonathan Stuart Mill would love to be a woman's man but he goes about it all wrong. His shoulder-to-shoulder egalitarian approach destroys sexual chemistry; he is simply not manly enough—a quality somewhat different from mere masculinity. As Joseph Lash comments in “Eleanor and Franklin”, Mrs Roosevelt was charmed by Sergeant Earl Miller because “his helpfulness and brusque gallantries, and his barracks-room language, his cynicism, and his roughneck qualities were a new and interesting experience... And to be squired around by this handsome state trooper who paid her small masculine attentions and treated her as a woman appealed to long dormant feminine qualities in her. She even liked his lapses into a roughness...considered rudeness.”

Jonathan needs to get it through his head that a slap on the behind once in a while is a viable alternative. That ultraliberal woman's man, FDR, was well aware of the value of this lese-majeste. Commented daughter Anna; “If Father became friendly with a princess or a secretary, he'd reach out and give a pat to her fanny and laugh like hell and was probably telling a funny story at the same time...”

The woman's man can not only get away with male chauvinism, but he can make a woman like it. Some men are so smug and condescending that they can make even “Hello” sound chauvinistic. Others, like Jonathan

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Stuart Mill, talk so much about sexual equality that it becomes meaningless and suspect. The woman's man does not trouble to conceal his take-charge manner. It is one of life's great comforts to hear him say, "Now, sit down and listen." Such ultimatums are always followed up with a "Now, now" (pat-pat). This is the man to be in a Titanic lifeboat with. Jonathan Stuart Mill would need help with the rowing.¹⁴⁵

"DO YOU TELL YOUR BELOVED THAT HE OR SHE IS EXCEPTIONAL?" (19 JULY 2005)

If you were to die today, would your last moments be spent regretting that you had not sufficiently expressed your love and appreciation for those you love, or would you at least have the comfort of knowing that those you leave behind know how much you love and appreciate them? Would you be regretting not having done everything in your power to have the best relationship possible? Or would you at least know that none of the time you had had together was wasted?

Three years ago I read an article that I have never forgotten. I could remember neither the title nor the author, and I was not entirely sure of the newspaper or the year in which it appeared either, so it took the best part of a day to track it down. Perhaps when you hear about it, you will understand why I was determined to find it.

The title of this moving article is "The house where David Rosenzweig lives"; it is by Christie Blatchford, and it appeared in *The National*

Post on 29th July, 2002. [...] The article began:

Last Friday evening marked only the second Sabbath without David Rosenzweig upon the planet.

This "big, handsome man who so filled this house and the hearts in it" had been murdered by a knifeman in the street, probably just because he was Jewish. The article was about the incredible love he and his wife and family had for one another. He was 49, his widow was 46, and they had been passionately married for nearly 25 years. He left children aged eight to 24 and a new baby grandchild. In the article that seemed to have been written from the heart, Christie Blatchford wrote:

Mr. Rosenzweig loved Shabbas with a passion. He was a man of inexhaustible appetite for life, period — passionate about his family, his work as a chartered accountant, his daily prayers, about his study of the Torah, about his first grandchild, little Avi, only three months old, whom he would beg to hold and walk whenever the baby woke up in the night — but Shabbas is who he really was. He treasured it such that the Rosenzweigs have long been in the habit of lighting the candles early, before the traditional start at sundown, because, like the child who can't sleep on Christmas morning, Mr. Rosenzweig simply couldn't wait for this time every, week, because he wanted more of it.

After his death, his family continued to honour their traditions, determined not to be destroyed by the loss of the head of the household they had all loved so much. Mr.

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Rosenzweig's wife said, "I can't bear to think he will never be back." but she told her children that their lovely father and his righteousness was in each of them, and they had a responsibility

"to live the same way Daddy did; to work hard, like Daddy did; to love one another, as Daddy loved you: to be kind, as Daddy was."

Mrs. Rosenzweig's mother whispered to Christie Blatchford, "You see why my daughter is so beautiful? Her soul shows through on her face."

Mr. Rosenzweig had been exceptionally kind to his mother-in-law when her husband had died, and he was also a devoted son to his own mother, who had lost virtually her whole family in the Holocaust.

"I don't believe really this has happened to me," she said, "to my beautiful children."

In this article, Christie Blatchford painted an exquisite word picture of Mr. Rosenzweig's life and goodness, of his devotion to and deep love for his family, and of his close-knit extended family sitting around the Shabbas table, mourning their loss and trying to be strong.

Every morning, when Chavie Rosenzweig wakes up, "I say to David, I can't believe it's another day without you."

And then, she pulls herself together, and prepares to face the world in the way that would surely make his heart burst with pride, but will never fill the big chair that sits empty at the head of the table.

She said of her husband's amazing ability to get so much done in a day and still have time to have lunch with one of his children, to help them with their homework, and to do so much for so many: "His tiredness would not limit his goodness."

Mrs. Rosenzweig still remembers how as a young woman newly engaged, she was so excited by her coming marriage that she could hardly study for her exams at York University and actually wrote one of her professors a note, begging his indulgence. (This trait, to be crazy about the men in their lives, runs in the family. Her daughter spotted her future husband when she was just 15 and found him so utterly fetching she would actually shriek with joy whenever she got a glimpse of him.)

But what is so inspiring to me about the relationship of Mr. And Mrs. Rosenzweig is the intensity of their positive regard and reverence for one another, and the fact that they expressed this esteem every single day. "The only surprise about David," Mrs. Rosenzweig said, "is that he just got better."

David Rosenzweig lived in this house, surrounded by the love of these people. Their greatest solace is that they loved him unreservedly every day, and told him so, and he them; there is nothing important among them that was left unsaid. [...]

"We all knew who we had. It's not as if we knew after the fact. I told him every day he was *yotzai meen haklal* — it means exceptional — and he said it to me in return."

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It is so important to look at your spouse with a good eye—to look for the good, to assume the best, to give the benefit of the doubt, and to find the admirable—and to express it. The other person cannot know how you feel or what you think unless you tell him or her. And when you do express these things, it makes those you love feel appreciated and loved; it makes them feel visible; it makes their hearts sing. And when people feel good, they do good, they achieve more, they give more, they love more. It is easy to see how this family developed such deep, meaningful, and actively devoted love and regard for one another, and why their relationships were so strong. I wish the same for everyone.

Read the whole article. There is so much more to it than the little I have quoted. [...] ¹⁴⁶

“DO YOU HAVE UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS?” (23 JULY 2005)

Does reading glowing reports of other couples' breathtakingly close, wildly thrilling, deeply engaged and loving relationships, especially those that have lasted well into their 4th decade (or in some cases, *month*) make you feel inadequate? Do you wistfully read their posts and wish that you were as lucky as they? Do you imagine that their lives are perfect, their relationship is perfect, their children are perfect, and that they live in a perfect house with a perfectly maintained garden where a perfectly groomed and sweet-smelling dog has his beautifully-crafted hardwood kennel?

Do you wonder what it is that these poster couples have or do that you and your “other half” don't? Do you find yourself comparing your lover or yourself with those written about on this and other sites—and not liking what you see? Do you want your spouse to be more like the poster partner of your dreams, more attentive, less needy, stronger, more exciting, less absentminded, more cherishing, less disrespectful, more interested in a Taken In Hand relationship, less inconsistent, more self-controlled, [add complaints to taste, here].

Do you find yourself ending relationships when they have barely begun, because the other person shows signs of not being perfect? These other folk have the perfect partner, so why should you have to make do with anyone less than your ideal? Do you wonder why the only ones who want to see you again are the unworthy, the unpleasant, and the downright criminally insane?

The poster couples may have all that you want in life—or they may not. You only see what they present to the world. You don't see beyond the perfection to the fallible and faulty human beings they really are. You don't know what goes on in their lives—not really. That woman who writes such glowing posts about her husband does not dwell on (or mention) the faults he has that you would never be able to stand. That man who writes about his beloved wife, loves her despite the fact that she has more faults than he ever thought he'd be able to live with before he met her.

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It is not that they are lying—far from it! They are simply focusing on the positive, the desirable, the good parts of their loved one, and allowing the less desirable aspects of the person to fade into the back of their mind. They have weighed up the pros and cons, the wonderful bits and the irritating (or worse) bits, and, finding that their loved one is, as Pat Allen says, 51% or better, they have wholeheartedly committed themselves to their loved one and their relationship.

We are all fallible human beings full of faults and problems and annoying habits. If you wait for perfection, you will die before you ever find that perfect person. If you focus on what your spouse lacks, or on what he or she should be or do that he or she isn't or won't do, you will keep those things uppermost in your mind. And when you keep those things uppermost in your mind, you will feel bad, frustrated, annoyed, critical, dissatisfied, sad, pessimistic, and angry.

When you feel those things, how will it feel to be your spouse? Will your damning judgements, irritation, dissatisfaction, anger and pessimism about your relationship feel good, loving, kind, accepting, and friendly? Or will it feel painful, upsetting, depressing, and unloving?

As Tevemer's lovely article* shows, even in the best relationships, with the most good feeling and warmth, and the best problem-solving institutions, there can be misunderstandings in which each think that the

other is being distant or unfriendly. If this can happen even when there really isn't a problem, imagine how it must feel to the other person when you really *are* exuding negativity towards him or her.

So what these poster couples are doing is accentuating the positive, and *not* expecting more than any human being could possibly deliver. It is not enough to say that you think we are all fallible: you have to act on it. That means, amongst other things, assuming that you and your loved ones will make mistakes, do the wrong thing, and have misunderstandings. Expect mistakes! And don't define yourself, your loved one and your relationship by them. To feel more positive, focus on the positive.

Are you are a single person who has realised that your expectations have been way too high, or that you have been rejecting potential amours who are better than 51%? Do you read articles like LifeOfCuriosity's "Given a choice between two men ..." and wonder how to tell whether you are expecting too much, or putting up with more than you should? (It is not always easy to tell!)

If you are now berating yourself for having expected too much, either from a long-term spouse, or from potential amours, reading the next paragraph may make you feel much better about yourself!

I am ashamed to admit this, but I once stopped seeing a man who was extremely intelligent, fascinating, had the same ideas and values as I, was marvellously kind, considerate and protective, and whom I found

* "Closing the gap," 14 June 2005.

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very attractive (extremely rare!) after only four dates because on the third and fourth date he wore enough aftershave to wake the dead, and he talked with his mouth full. How completely stupid of me! Whatever possessed me to allow such completely trivial things to put me off him? Talk about not giving him a chance!

I won't make that mistake again. But I will make other mistakes. We all do. All the time. That is the human condition. And we have to live now, we all our imperfections, striving for improvement but always fallible. But when you truly take into account that we are all fallible and prone to error, that makes it possible not to get upset or angry about every mistake that loved ones make. It makes acceptance possible. Poster couples are not necessarily more lucky than the rest of us. They have kind hearts and a good eye. They see the best in people rather than the worst. They accept one another as human beings and don't expect perfection. There are no perfect persons, there is only us.¹⁴⁷

"SHADES OF GREY" (25 JULY 2005)

I've met a number of people who see the world as being black and white. I love you—I hate you. I adore cabbage—I hate cabbage. She is wonderful—she is evil. You are so perfect for me—how could you be so wrong?!

These are the people who one minute can't do enough for you, and the next, are lashing out at you. These are the people who pedestalise a

person, then knock the person from that pedestal because the person did something inconsistent with the unrealistic picture of pedestals perfection they had in their mind.

Such individuals can be extremely charming and giving—until you show yourself to be human and fallible. Then they start seeing you as the devil. They act as though you should be a godlike figure of perfection, and are angry when you can't live up to that ideal. Even if you've done nothing wrong, you can still find yourself on the end of their anger, when they have misunderstood you or misinterpreted something you have said or done. These individuals tend not to recognise their own fallibility, and this means that they are completely blind to the fact that they can be mistaken in their damning judgements.

Instead of taking it for granted that everybody makes mistakes in their thinking sometimes, and that life is often shades of grey, they take a black-and-white approach and put themselves in the position of an angry god harshly judging others. There is no middle ground, no tolerance, no leniency, no magnanimity.

I have found that people who live their lives by absolutes can be extremely judgemental, no matter how charming they might seem when you're on the pedestal.

In a relationship, I think that signs of such absolutist, black-and-white thinking should be regarded as a warning flag of potential problems ahead. This is particularly important for a woman to be aware of if she wants or is in a Taken In Hand rela-

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tionship, because there is a real risk of abuse.

I would advise any woman looking for a Taken In Hand relationship or in a Taken In Hand relationship to check that the man she is with can admit mistakes, deals kindly with dissent, does not get too angry if she disagrees with him about something, and neither pedestalises nor damns people. Look for a man who has a realistic view that human beings make mistakes.

In my relationships, I have found that while there are occasions where black is black or white is white, most of life is in shades of grey and should be viewed as such.

Refusing to listen to another person's viewpoint simply because it does not fit your mindset can lead in my view to the worst cases of abuse and yes, fanaticism.

I have found that even though I may disagree with my girlfriend at times, that disagreement does not invalidate her own belief in what is right. Though I make the decisions in the relationship, I always seek her input and agreement where possible. As a result, she never feels that her wants and needs are being ignored. If I were to take an absolutist view that I am right and that she is wrong, then I would a) be incredibly stupid and wrong, as I am just as fallible as the next man, and b) reduce her to being little more than a statue or ornament. A statue on a pedestal might not make mistakes, but it can't love either.

Though I have titled this piece "shades of grey" to distinguish it from black-and-white thinking, in fact, "love is a many-splendoured

thing", and my relationship with my girlfriend has many beautiful colours and hues. To view it in a monochrome manner would be to give less, to be less, to experience less and to live less than I could.¹⁴⁸

"MAGNIFICENT MAN OR MERELY MALE?" **(26 JULY 2005)**

A man is not defined by his relationship with a set of arbitrary and fashionable qualities.* A man is defined by his relationship with God. The more a man submits to God the more manly he will become, however this fact is not well understood because many people don't understand the nature of God and, indeed, many people go to some trouble to deliberately misunderstand the nature of God.

God can be compassionate, merciful, creative, imaginative, magnanimous, rational, tender hearted, sorrowful, awesome, joyful, bold, fearsome, fearless, a mighty warrior, a tender lover, a protective parent, an unmoveable judge, a gentle intercessor. In short, God expresses every good quality and has conferred the potential for every good quality onto men because mankind is created in the likeness of God. A person of male gender is a man only to the extent that he is able to express these

* [Note to readers: This article makes a distinction between "man" and "male", using "male" to refer to biological anatomy and "man" to refer to qualities of character and personality. It is a clumsy way of making the distinction, for which I apologise, but I couldn't think of a better one.]

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same qualities when they are appropriate.

Consequently as a male person submits himself to God he becomes more of the man that God intended him to be. Thus a true man can be aggressive when aggression is rightly called for, merciful when mercy is rightly called for, steadfast when steadfastness is rightly called for, resolute when resoluteness is rightly called for, creative when creativity is rightly called for, just when justice is rightly called for, courageous when courage is rightly called for, passionate when passion is rightly called for, fearsome (i.e., inspiring fear) when fearsomeness is rightly called for, gentle when gentleness is called for, ... and so on. The true man is always honest to the fullest extent of every sense of that word.

A woman's desire will be for her man and he will rule over her. But the man referred to in that passage in the book of Genesis is not the person of male gender who populates the corridors of power or flaunts himself in our media or who bumbles indecisively or measures his progress through life by the numbers on his bank statement. Our fascination with "heroes" is not just some transient sociological phenomena but is because those so-called heroes do, in some small and incomplete way, resemble man as God intended man to be; as God designed and created man to be. Women were created and designed to respond to that kind of a man; they were created to be his helper, to be the one who is capable of both nourishing his strength and also of being nourished by it. They were

created not to be his equal but to be his complement, in the sense of being that which makes a thing complete, makes it perfect and brings it to peak performance. In that role they can be satisfied.

The man of God is not limited to being a naive philanthropist wrapped in sackcloth and sporting a haircut that even his elderly neighbour's decrepit pet dog would be embarrassed by. The man of God can be like David (the former King of Israel) who was in turns the ferocious warrior, wise ruler, passionate lover, magnanimous and merciful victor who remembered to say his prayers like a little child and who repented humbly even after committing one of the most appalling acts of sin recorded in the whole bible (namely, the cowardly and treacherous murder of his loyal servant). The man of God can be like Paul (known as an Apostle), who stayed firm under severe pressure who remained cheerful under torment, repented of his persecution of Christians, remained faithful in the face of rejection and, in between penning missives full of concern and care, ran around the world having the sort of splendid adventure that wouldn't look out of place as a chapter in a tale of Sinbad the sailor. The man of God says his prayers on his knees and puts his trust in God but that doesn't stop him from using his initiative and working boldly and energetically to achieve something worthwhile.

Let's forget all that boring twaddle about a woman wanting a man because she perceives him to be a good source of chromosomes for her potential offspring ... a woman wants a

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hero because heroes are *exciting* and *interesting*, they are *enlivening* and they are sometimes a lot of *fun* to be with. The man of God is a hero to the need of the moment and a woman wants to be ruled by such a man because that is what she was created to be satisfied by; in his presence she becomes more intensely alive emotionally, intellectually, erotically, creatively. Confronted with such a man she might even be able to overlook the dodgy haircut (it can be dealt with later after all).

However for the lonely woman seeking this kind of hero—the man who will take her in hand and contribute a new vitality to her life just as she encourages him in his—there is a problem: Sometimes it seems that our society is determined to prevent persons of male gender from becoming the men that God intended them to be, and does so by refusing to contemplate or teach the necessary qualities, by ridiculing those qualities and by compartmentalising them. Furthermore our society tinkers with truth, dabbles with deceit and regards morality as a fashion and not, as it actually is, an unchanging quality of the universe which is itself defined by, and is an expression of, the nature of God. Those persons of male gender who wish to become men must first work out what a man actually is because society certainly will not teach them. Many male persons either abandon the quest at a point of pleasure or simply don't live long enough to make the discovery.

How can a woman be satisfied when the thing she herself is designed to be satisfied by, namely a

man, is in short supply? That makes life a little difficult so, in place of a man, she might substitute something else; usually something that bears a passing resemblance to the shadow of a man. It might be an aggressive male person, a pushy male person, an assertive male person, a clever male person, an ambitious male person, a strong male person, or a caring male person. Some don't even aim that high and just choose the male person with the most expensive looking car, hoping that expensive cars and manliness are somehow related. If a woman is lucky she will find a male person who has enough of the right qualities to make her respond as she was created to respond: kneeling, adoring, supporting, encouraging, strengthening him by yielding herself, giving her mind, her energy, her attention, her love and her passion ... and receiving back the same from him. However many women (perhaps most) are not so lucky and, in any case, many of them are just as confused as the males they associate with and would rather accept something less challenging, less demanding. Of course some didn't want a man at all but just wanted the expensive car with or without the male accessory pack.

Many women feel a deep need for a man to take charge, “wear the trousers”, or as this forum describes it “to be taken in hand”, because they were designed to yield to a man as I have tried to describe him. It is not a educational or cultural issue but a creation issue. They desire to yield to such a man for the same reason that they desire to fill their lungs with clean sweet air: Their

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lungs were created to breathe clean sweet air and they were created to yield to a man. However just as the air in our cities is not the type of air women were designed to find satisfaction in breathing, neither are the men in our cities the type of men that women are designed find satisfaction in yielding to.¹⁴⁹

“EXIT TO EDEN: THE MOVIE” (27 JULY 2005)

Exit To Eden is not a Taken In Hand movie per se, but I got a Taken In Hand message from it that I much needed to hear.

It is about two police officers who are hired to find a smuggler/killer who is going to a BDSM resort.

In one scene, Rosie O'Donnell asks the dominatrix how she got into the business. She tells the story of her true submissive nature, but how she got involved with a Dom who taught her that if she is in control, she will never be hurt again (she had had hurtful experiences with men in the past). Hence, she becomes a Domme and evidently for the time being, sees this as a way to be safe—not to be hurt again—by being in control. O'Donnell asks her, “What about not being in control but still feeling safe?”, and the dominatrix concedes that would be a great thing, but when O'Donnell asks her if she has ever experienced that, she evades the question.

But then the dominatrix falls in love with a client who acts the submissive role while at the resort, yet leaves him after overhearing victims of domestic abuse at a police station.

She decides that by giving up her control, even to a good man, she risks too much; she may end up like those women if she doesn't keep control.

But in the end, O'Donnell convinces her that a woman who has been hurt by a man or men must learn to trust the good guys—that giving up control can be a good thing, if it's the right man.

That was me (although I never became a professional dominatrix, lol). I always felt I had to be in charge in relationships, or that I risked pain and hurt again. I was sexually abused as a child by an uncle (something my father saved me from after he found out about it), and later by a boyfriend who date-raped me when I tried breaking it off with him. Because of this, I felt I needed to be in charge in all my relationships, or I risked that kind of mistreatment again. One thing I distinctly remember—and not feeling at all good about it—was that I felt powerless in those two horrible situations.

Taken In Hand taught me that, with the *right* man, giving up control can be safe after all. The movie *Exit To Eden* also teaches this, and I cried as I watched it because I finally realized just why Taken In Hand has been such a godsend for not only me, but also my husband. My husband is one of the good guys, and he didn't deserve disrespect because of what two other men did before him. My husband is very much like my father was—my protector, a good man who only wants what is best for me.¹⁵⁰

"IS HE DRIVING YOU MAD?" (29 JULY 2005)

Sometimes, whatever kind of relationship a couple has, they have an on-going disagreement that never seems to get resolved. One common issue is about driving. Often, one person loves to drive assertively, and perhaps also in such a way as to attract speeding tickets on a regular basis, while the other drives in a very relaxed, measured way and cannot understand why anyone ever needs to "waste money" getting speeding tickets and paying through the nose for increased insurance premiums.

Each feels that the other is not taking them seriously, not listening to them, and that the other should act differently from his or her preferred way. What to do?

I sympathise with both sides of this problem. I would really not like it if someone were to try to get me to drive in a less assertive way. My father teaches "Advanced Motorists" and when he taught me to drive, he was always telling me to be more assertive. "He who hesitates is lost!" he used to say. You have to drive assertively in London, or you might cause an accident; and although I rarely drive in London any more, learning to drive there seems to me to have been good discipline and useful for driving anywhere. I also like driving fast, though these days I tend to stick to the speed limit. But still, I would really find it quite objectionable to be told to change my preferred way of driving. I really enjoy driving assertively,

and I think my driving would be less safe if I were harangued into driving less assertively.

I sometimes get driven to places by one or other of my friends—men who drive very "non-assertively", shall we say. I used to have a very strong urge to tell them to stop being such wimpy drivers, but obviously that is not something one can say, and eventually, the urge to tell them to "get a grip and drive like a man" passed, and these days I just smile inwardly and accept it as just the way they are—and it now seems endearing.

Conversely, I have one friend who is a racing driver, and whenever I am mad enough to get in the car with him, he makes a point of completely terrifying me with his driving. I know he is very skilled, but it is still such that I am literally weak at the knees and white-knuckled with fear on the rare occasions I let him drive me somewhere. And I have another friend who so enjoys speeding that he was banned from driving altogether, and even before that, what he spent on his insurance premiums would rival the GDP of a small country. I can only get in his car if I take copious quantities of diazepam beforehand. (I jest! But I'm sure it would help!)

So I can totally understand and sympathise both with those who have a desire to tell someone else how to drive, and also with those being told to change their driving style. But since the most common desire to tell someone else how to drive is the desire to tell someone to slow down and drive less assertively, let's look at that.

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Suppose you are a woman in a Taken In Hand relationship, and your husband drives like a maniac and gets lots of speeding tickets and pays a large proportion of his income in insurance premiums. Suppose you have asked him to slow down, and you have repeatedly tried to persuade him to see sense and drive less aggressively, but he won't listen. You are worried that the ever-increasing costs of his driving are going to put your car ownership at risk, because you simply won't be able to afford the insurance premiums. You think that he is being completely irrational, unreasonable, and wasteful with the family money. You feel that he is not taking you seriously, and that if things were reversed, he would have *made* you slow down and not accepted any excuses. What can you do in this situation?

My advice, for what it's worth, is that, unless your man really is putting your car-owning at risk, you should try to back off and desist from trying to persuade him. Actually, you could presumably continue to own a car as long as he was not on the insurance, so however he is driving, it is presumably only putting at risk his own driving and car-owning status, not yours. Keep that in mind.

Even if your man is putting your family car insurance up dramatically, I still suggest that you back off. Why? Because if this has become a big issue between you, your man is probably feeling harangued, and when people feel harangued, they tend to do the opposite of the thing the other person wants them to do.

So it might be counter-productive to keep trying to persuade him to change his driving style. He has probably already noticed how much you are paying for insurance. He probably already knows the risks. So reminding him is haranguing, and whether you are dominant, submissive, or anything else, haranguing is generally a bad idea.

That is all very well, but if you are in this situation, that doesn't help you to feel better. So what might? Here is a suggestion:

Can you think of your husband's speeding, getting tickets, paying more for insurance, and so on, as his hobby, his interest, his passion—something he loves, something he wants to spend money on—his one extravagance? Most people have one extravagance in their life—something they spend a disproportionate amount of money on, because they love it. In my case, it is my computer. My computer is ridiculously expensive—I spent six months' income on it—but I don't regret it for a moment. I expect to spend this amount every three years, and for me, that is a vast expense given that my income is usually very low. I no longer own a car, because I simply cannot afford to own and run a car as well as being an early adopter in terms of computers. Is your husband spending two months' earnings on speeding tickets and increased insurance premiums each year? Perhaps if you stop seeing it as an unnecessary expense, and start seeing it as something that matters to him, something that he wants to do and is prepared to pay for, it might help you to smile

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indulgently about it instead of feeling bad.

When I got my first and only speeding ticket, I initially felt a bit upset. The policeman who pulled me over was very polite but it was very embarrassing to be pulled over. But when I told a friend about it, he said to me in a blasé way—"Just think of it as a charge for using the motorway, don't think of it as a fine. You spend money when you go to the supermarket. Now you've spent money for the pleasure of driving at 120 mph on the motorway. It's not a big deal!" This really made me feel better. It didn't make me want to spend more money driving fast, but thinking of it as a choice of mine to spend that money, rather than a punishment, helped.

Likewise, if you think of this expense as being important to your husband, like my buying my computer was important to me, it might help you yourself feel better. No two individuals are going to have the same priorities, and everyone is going to have *some* disagreement about spending priorities. Can you allow him this extravagance? Can you think of it as being an endearing extravagance that gives him pleasure, rather than a waste of money? We all "waste" money in one way or another. This is his way. Try to see it this way for both your sakes.

The added advantage of backing off could be that when your husband no longer feels on the defensive about this issue, he will then be able to think rationally about whether this is an extravagance he really enjoys and thinks worth the money, or whether it is, as you presumably

think, a waste of money. He won't be able to think about it if he is feeling harangued.

But what if your reason for wanting your husband to slow down is that you fear that he is driving unsafely, and you literally fear being in a serious car accident if you get in the car with him? When I have felt this kind of fear, I have asked myself whether my fear is really justified, and have concluded that it is not. But if you think that your fear is justified, then, as in the case Marz Blak discussed here, don't get in the car with him. But ask yourself whether your husband's driving is really unsafe, or whether the real issue is that he is not listening to you.

If the real issue is that you feel unheard, and his driving is actually reasonably safe, then again, my advice is to back off. If you back off thoroughly and completely, and not just for a very short time, this will end what might be a psychological battle of wills in which he is defending his corner and determined not to be told what to do. When he no longer feels harangued, psychologically, he will be able to take your feelings into account more than is possible if there is a battle between you on this issue. But for this to happen, you really do have to back off and let this issue go.

This is difficult if you are feeling hurt, as you may well be if you are feeling unheard. But if you can find a way to accept your husband's driving as his choice rather than as a wrong he is doing to you, you may well find that he does take your feelings into account more in future.

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I can imagine being the person on either side of this issue, and if I were the driver being harangued to change my driving style, I can imagine finding it exceptionally difficult to take the other person's feelings into account, even if, on some level, I wanted to. It might well feel to me like a wrong on the other person's part to be haranguing me to change my driving style! Unless someone's driving really is putting others at risk, it is, in my view, a matter for him how he drives.

By contrast, on occasions when a passenger has been terrified and has asked me to slow down *but it has not been part of a battle of wills between us*, I have willingly taken that passenger's wishes into account. So if you can, think of what is happening not as your husband not hearing you, or as him otherwise wronging you, think of it as an issue between the two of you. See it as something having gone wrong in the dynamics between you rather than as a wrong he is doing you. That might help you to let it go and back off. And that will end the psychological battle of wills that might be adversely affecting your husband's ability to take your wishes into account.

Finally, if you are not sure whether you are engaging in a battle of wills and haranguing, one indication that that might be what is happening is if your arguments have shifted from one thing to another to another, such as from arguments about the costs, to arguments about safety. When arguments shift, that can be the smoking gun of a battle of wills. The good news is that if you realise that this is what is happening, it is likely

to make it easier for you to do the right thing and back off. And the sooner you do that, the sooner your husband will be able to take your wishes into account. In the midst of a battle of wills, only a saint would be able to do so.

Try not to think badly of the man you love. Your disapproval is probably very painful to him. He is a human being, not a god, and human beings do sometimes make mistakes and do the wrong thing. Try to keep in mind his good qualities and not let this come between you.¹⁵¹

"IMPREGNATION" (6 AUGUST 2005)

Taken In Hand relationships are, amongst other things, intensely sexual. Over and over again, couples have reported that changing their relationship from a conventional one to a Taken In Hand one has brought both deep intimacy and a white hot sexual connection. For those of a Taken In Hand bent, the effect is very powerful. It feels overwhelming and elemental, and perhaps even *animalistic* at times.

While many conventional couples desultorily try all sorts of toys and tricks and porn and partners to paper over the cracks of their expired desire, couples who have made the small but fundamental change to a Taken In Hand relationship report that that has swept away the need for props and playacting, in a tsunami of raw sex. Ideas that once seemed sexless now seethe with primal eroticism. Take impregnation, for example. That "turn-off—something to avoid", as one man put

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it, can suddenly become an overpowering need, an expression of possession, control, and the acceptance of and delight in that control.

"You bet it's a turn-on!" wrote one husband. "What could be more erotic than looking into my wife's eyes and impregnating her? I decided to make her pregnant. She submitted to my decision. Watching her waistline growing I'm seeing the results of my control and her affirmation of that control. I caused it. I made it happen. It's a HUGE turn-on. She said she didn't want to breastfeed but I told her she's got to, and she got that dreamy submissive look in her eye that tells me she needs a trip to the bedroom."

For a Taken In Hand woman, letting go and surrendering to the inevitable consequences of her husband's decision to impregnate her can be one of the most intense experiences she has ever known. Such women embrace and glory in their choice not to have a choice and even in their fear of pain in childbirth. Instead of feeling irked by the discomfort of third trimester pregnancy some experience it ecstatically, as masochistic rapture. Their expanding waistline is hard evidence of the man's control, of his power as a man, and of the woman's submission to that power. They glow not just because of the pregnancy itself but because they are high in the heaven of subspace. Owned and mastered, protected and loved, they are liberated and flying free in their bondage. Women thinking with their wombs? If you want to put it that way.

If you are the kind of woman who is thrilled by living under the control of a man, it is not unlikely that you too might thrill to the idea of your man having control over your body and life in this profound way. And it is precisely because it is, as one reader wrote, "the ultimate form of control over a woman" that some find it disturbing. Others just have zero interest in having children, and that is fine. This is definitely not for all Taken In Hand folk.

Even some individuals who have children or would like to have children will be feeling uncomfortable, disturbed and even sickened, upon reading this. I casually mentioned to a handful of easygoing friends the idea that some people find the idea of impregnation and pregnancy erotic and was met with horrified expressions and forceful statements to the effect that there is nothing *less* erotic. Several actually seemed sickened by the idea—as though I had just suggested that they might like to have an important part of their anatomy nailed to a bed post. There is something not quite decent about finding the idea of impregnation erotic. Especially if the man is in control of it and the woman is submitting to her husband's decision to impregnate her.

When I asked readers to answer these questions, some Taken In Hand readers reported finding the idea repugnant, but more interestingly, many readers reported either that they find the idea erotic, and in some cases that they had never found it erotic until they switched to a Taken In Hand relationship.

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"When my husband took control, it was natural for him to take control of my body and of my body's ability to procreate. He takes me whenever HE wants, which is all the time now we're in a Taken In Hand relationship, and if it [impregnation] happens it happens!"

"I am the first to admit that I find the idea of impregnation highly erotic, not to mention the physical evidence of the man's control in the woman's pregnant body, and I am the first to admit that it feels like a very primal, possibly even animalistic thing, and I am the first to admit that I go weak at the knees at the thought of a man controlling me with his penis as well as his rod. I did not feel like this until I was in a Taken In Hand relationship. I regret that when I had kids in the ordinary marriage I was in before, there was nothing erotic about impregnation and pregnancy but now there is. It's the control that makes the difference to me."

It is a terrible shame that so few women experience pregnancy and even impregnation erotically. It seems such a waste! How can something so thrilling be reduced to something so devoid of any erotic power? As a Taken In Hand friend wrote to me a while back when we discussed this: "All this time I thought I was the ONLY woman who was turned on by certain things, like having been pregnant (it made me feel submissive, as if my husband had finally "conquered" me by impregnating me. Anyone else would think me loony, but I know you won't."

No, I don't. I understand completely—and so do many of the Taken In Hand women, and indeed men, who have responded to my little survey:

"The idea of impregnation, making your woman pregnant and causing her to have your baby, requiring her to breastfeed the baby, the idea of YOU controlling all that, the idea of her being yours, submissive to you, in bondage to the inevitability of the consequences of YOUR decision as a man. I had never thought of those things as erotic until I met a woman who was prepared to give my dominant impulses free rein."

"In the context of your relationship, do you find the idea of impregnation erotic? Oh, YES. VERY! Not the raising of the children (I actually find that unsexy...the word "mom" to me is not a sexy word)..but the act of getting pregnant, of being pregnant, of giving birth, breastfeeding...YES!

Pregnancy? Breastfeeding the baby? Yes. and Yes.

Being sexually available to your husband (if you're a woman)? YES!"

"I have a fantasy that my wife loves. Here it is: My wife is reclining on the bed, naked and sweating in the heat of the day. Her belly is large and she is trying to find a comfortable position that will match her gravid state, but I have other ideas for her and she submits to my attention and to my demands, for she knows that she is mine. That she is my lover is obvious, but more than that, she has accepted me as her man and I have taken advantage of that acceptance and put her with child, my child. The bond now is deeper and more intimate for the changes it has wrought in her. Her very body

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has been altered in ways that make her even more beautiful, with the glow that only a pregnant woman can achieve and sustain. Her belly has swollen and grown to contain my child, but her breasts have also swollen and grown to meet my demands for the sweet nectar that she is able to produce for the babe, but which I have laid first claim to as is my right.

My thirst is insatiable and sometimes think I treat her little better than a dairy cow, though she has no complaints. I am constantly emptying her reservoirs to suit my thirst or sometimes simply to enjoy the sensation of her fountains of sweet and sticky juices cascading onto my body as I allow her to mount me and ride me, while leaving her breasts open to my attentions. I love to caress her generous mounds and squeeze them to the point of ecstasy where pain and pleasure collide and streams of fresh milk explode from her, covering my face. I savor the taste as it drips down over my tongue. Each time I take her and suckle at her breast, taking all she can give, is a pleasure greater than before and each time she recovers and her breasts grow even larger than before until she must beg me to help her relieve the pressure and once again we fall into a cycle of pleasure. There will plenty of milk for the baby when it arrives and she will enjoy nursing even more for the echoes of pleasure that it generates.

So yes, I can certainly see the erotic aspect of pregnancy within a Taken In Hand relationship. In one sense, this is an ultimate surrender of self and acceptance of a man as head of

the household, for a woman to allow his child to grow and develop within her body. As far as writing a post, you can use whatever you like from what you've just read. I can't fathom how any man could turn away from the sight of his pregnant partner without enjoying the physical changes and benefits."

"Yes, I find the idea of being impregnated, pregnant and breastfeeding all very sexy. When my husband takes me he tells me he's going to make me pregnant and that he will look after us and love us and be the head of the household I need to obey. We both find this very sexy."

"I find many of the things you mentioned slightly erotic in a fantasy way, but my husband and I were both divorced with four children from our previous marriages when we met, and we do not have any children together. I very much wish I had been able to have gone through pregnancy, babies, and breast feeding with my husband, but that was not meant to be. However, I find the idea of erotic lactation interesting and I'm pretty sure my husband would love it!"

"I didn't find impregnation or pregnancy sexy at all until I started taking my wife in hand. It's not likely that I'll make her with child as we're not a young couple, but we share the fantasy that we are young and fertile and that I will implant my seed in her and that she'll give me a baby. She would look very beautiful pregnant with my baby."

"I find the notion of continuous sexual availability extremely exciting. I make myself available to my man any time he wants me. In our 6

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years, I have never said no to his advances, because I always want him, especially when he wants me. He is dominant in bed and sets the frequency for us, which is usually every 3 days. This is fine with me and I receive his advances (or make my own) with pleasure. ... The notion of impregnation is not exciting to me (largely because of the practicality of it, him having had a vasectomy and I quite happy not having children younger than mine now is, 14). He occasionally speaks of having the vasectomy reversed and "knocking me up", so it must arouse him."

"I never used to find things like impregnation, pregnancy and lactation erotic—anything but! It was not until I started thinking about being in a Taken In Hand relationship that it started to appeal to me. For me, a Taken In Hand relationship means the man having control over me. Having control includes having control of my body. The ultimate kind of control is to impregnate me and cause me to bear a child. The idea of being brought into subjection in this way is one of the most erotic things I can think of. That, to my mind, is the ultimate level of control. The idea of being impregnated and then watching and feeling the inevitable changes in my body, all caused by him, his will, his decision—then giving birth to his child, and doing so naturally and without pain relief, then nursing his child until he tells me I may wean the child—these ideas haunt my fantasies."

"As a society we have come far away from our natural primeval desires. Where sex used to be erotic

for its power to impregnate, now we have to employ a host of props and artificial stimulants to make it possible for us to perform sexually. My wife and I have moved away from that. We have stripped sex to its natural state. I do not permit the use of contraception and I require her to be available to me whenever I choose. Both she and I find the idea of impregnation erotic. She is fearful of pregnancy but she does not resist when I enter her and her body is always ready for me. If I make her pregnant she will bear my child. We joke about her being barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen but she knows that that is how I want her, and she loves me enough to accept that it is my right as her husband to make her pregnant if I so choose. She accepts that if I make her pregnant, I will need to exert even more control over her than I do currently, for she will be carrying my child, and I have a right to protect the health of my wife and my child."

In a follow-up email message, the writer quoted in the previous paragraph confirmed, indeed stressed, that his wife is not merely acquiescing but actually finds all this very erotic. Not everyone does—there were some very negative responses from older women in particular—but the more I think about it, the more exciting and fun I think it is to view what can be quite difficult, stressful experiences (pregnancy and breastfeeding) erotically. Experiencing these things so many women find unpleasant, and so many men find repulsive, as being hard evidence of the man's control and thus thrilling instead of off-putting, is

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very valuable if you want to have children. Couples who view impregnation, pregnancy and breastfeeding erotically bind themselves together sexually. And when a couple is bound together in this way, other problems are often much easier to solve.¹⁵²

"HOLDING COATS AND OPENING DOORS" (7 AUGUST 2005)

My husband and I were on a road trip, crossing the Rockies on a cold night in December. We came into a small town in western Colorado, found a motel, and then went out to the town's one good restaurant (logs, stone, big fireplace, bar, steaks) for a late supper.

The table next to ours was occupied by a large family group of maybe a dozen, evidently gathered for a birthday. My husband—tall, broad-shouldered, bearded, dashing and dark in his black hat and dust-er—caught the fascination of girl at that table (she was maybe 10 or 11), and she kept looking across at him all through our dinner.

As we prepared to leave, my Big Guy got our coats. After buttoning himself up, he swathed me back into my long alpaca coat, and snugged my muffler around my neck. He noticed the girl watching at him again—this time in astonished curiosity. He got this funny twinkle in his eyes, set his hat firmly on his head, tugged on his gloves, and abruptly turned and strode over to the young lady.

He bent over low, briefly whispered something in her ear, and

returned to me with a flourish. He was grinning.

"What did you tell her?" I asked him.

"I told her that she should never, ever, ever put up with a man who won't help her with her coat."

My father told me similar things when I was a girl. Holding coats, opening doors, and fetching and carrying are ways that men demonstrate that they are watchful, protective, and caring. Such manners are the mark of a dominant man who knows that his strength is only of use when he puts it into the service of others. As such, they're a useful signal that a man may be worthy of a woman's submission and trust.

This is why my son been opening my doors and carrying packages for me since he was four. It's not that I can't do this stuff for myself. He and his stepdad are both well aware that I can. It's that he needs to feel that he is strong and useful, and know that his greatest power lies in putting that strength into the service of his family.¹⁵³

"WOMEN WHO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR OWN ACTIONS" (8 AUGUST 2005)

On Taken In Hand there are many articles whose aim is to alert women to the dangers involved in entering a non-equal relationship. But men face dangers in a Taken In Hand relationship too, and it is helpful, if you are a single man seeking a Taken In Hand relationship, to be aware of the dangers and more importantly, aware of how to minimise those dangers. If you are a single woman

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seeking a Taken In Hand relationship, understanding what you are asking of the man might make it easier to be a bit more patient than some of us feel. You also need to take full responsibility for your actions.

Whatever kind of Taken In Hand relationship you have or want to have, there are dangers to be aware of. Any time one person has control or power over the other, there is a risk that the person being controlled will not in fact enjoy the fact that she lacks control. But assuming that the man is a good man who loves the woman and wants her to be happy, he will himself find it distressing if his control of the woman does not promote her happiness. The man in a Taken In Hand relationship is not a monster or a narcissist: he really wants his woman to be happy.

If the relationship involves violence, such as spanking, whipping, or any other kind of violence or other SM activities, the dangers are all the greater. There may be some dangers for the woman, but the dangers for the man need to be kept in mind too. In many jurisdictions, any SM/violence is illegal, whether or not it is contenting, and being prosecuted might well ruin a man's life.

Women need to keep this in mind. If they want a man to risk having his life ruined with a terrible criminal prosecution, they had better be worth it. And they should bend over backwards to minimise this risk for the man.

In a Taken In Hand relationship involving violence (yes, obviously that is *consensual* or it would not be a Taken In Hand relationship, it

would be abuse) the woman must take full responsibility for her own actions. She must take responsibility for her own physical and psychological risk.

If you are a man considering whether or not to risk being violent with your woman, ask yourself whether she understands the physical and psychological risks, and whether she is prepared to take responsibility for them. Especially if there is an element of consensual non-consent involved, the chances are that no matter how well-meaning and careful the man is, at some point there will be a mistake, and the woman will have a bad experience. If she does not understand and expect this to happen, the woman has no business asking the man to engage with her in this way. And the man would be crazy to accede to her request for spanking (or whatever other SM/violent activity she wants). If the woman does not understand that occasionally, the man will do the wrong thing, and she will bear the brunt of the adverse consequences, again, she is not safe to engage with in this way.

We have to take responsibility for our own risk. If you choose to engage in physically or psychologically risky behaviour, you cannot put all the responsibility on the other person. You could choose to have a non-violent conventional relationship. If you want a Taken In Hand relationship, and especially if you want a violent relationship, *you are responsible for your own risk.*

When something bad happens, what will you do? Run to the police? Throw a tantrum? Turn into a Fatal

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Attraction bunny boiler type? Sulk? Or will you deal with it, forgive your man, and get on with your life together?

If you are wondering why anything bad ever has to happen, then in my opinion, you are currently not realistic enough to be in a Taken In Hand relationship. Human beings make mistakes. Human beings misjudge things. Human beings do the wrong thing—even really good people. You cannot expect a man to perfectly judge every situation. If you are in a Taken In Hand relationship, there will be occasions in which you suffer unfortunate consequences that you really hate or that make you really distressed at the time. That is the price you pay for the intensity of a Taken In Hand relationship: it is *risky*. There are *dangers*.

If you are a man with the kind of woman who thinks that the man has all the responsibility and that he will be to blame if anything goes wrong, my advice to you is either to end the relationship and find someone who understands her responsibility for her own risk, or do not engage in anything that might possibly be deemed illegal.

If you are a man seeking a hardcore Taken In Hand relationship with violence and consensual non-consent, pick your woman very carefully. Your freedom depends on it. Do not rush into a relationship. Take your time. Get to know the woman very well before you start taking legal risks (i.e., engaging in any kind of violence or consensual non-consent).

Do not start engaging violently until you have got to know the woman

well enough to have discovered her faults and how she behaves when she is stressed or in an argument with you. People can seem very nice and charming and sane until something bad happens. Then you find out what they are really like under the superficial gloss. Know what she is really like before you do anything that could land you in court. Do not be bulldozed into acting in haste... Women: you just have to be patient. Think about what you are asking of him! Give it time!

It is not enough for you (the man) to know that the woman really wants you to take her in hand against her will and with violence. You need to be sure that she will not suddenly turn on you when what she has asked for turns out not to be what she wants in a particular situation. You need to be sure that she deeply believes in taking responsibility for her own actions and risks. You need to be sure that she understands that you are fallible and that on occasion you will make a mistake. You need to be sure that she strongly believes that it would be *wrong* of her to go to the police in the event that something bad were to happen as a consequence of the relationship she wants. You need to be sure that she feels strongly protective of you.

Yes, you need to be sure that she feels strongly protective of you, and that this does not change, Jekyll and Hyde style, when the two of you have a disagreement or fight of some kind.

Is she capable of being discreet? Is she the kind of woman who will blab to all and sundry about what

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you are doing to her? Does she understand that *careless talk costs lives*? If you think that the woman you are considering entering a Taken In Hand relationship with might be indiscreet, you would be a fool to risk entering into a relationship with this woman. Find one who is capable of discretion. Find a woman who believes in keeping the private sphere very private. Such a woman is far less likely to cause a problem down the line.

The woman needs to have considerable maturity. This does not mean she has to be chronologically older. It means that she needs to have enough psychological strength and autonomy and self-esteem and good sense and rationality not to be permanently harmed in the event that something goes wrong. As a man, you have some responsibility here to check that the woman you are thinking of having a relationship with can handle it. Be honest with yourself. Is this woman likely to be destroyed by this relationship? Or harmed in any way? Then obviously it would be wrong to have a relationship with her even if she wants you to very badly.

Both men and women beginning Taken In Hand relationships would do well to take their time and check how the other person behaves in a crisis or fight. If the other person is unable to apologise, or if the other person has a blaming, negative, hostile personality, the alarm bells should be deafening. We must all take responsibility for our own actions and for our own risks. And we had all better be able to handle it when something bad happens. Be-

cause it most assuredly will. That is the human condition. Deal with it!¹⁵⁴

"FEMININE SUBMISSION AND TRADITIONAL LANGUAGE" (8 AUGUST 2005)

I have never before felt inclined to participate in an Internet chat room or study group, but the remarkably intelligent, tasteful, and civilized character of this site, together with the fascinating topic to which it is devoted, invite me to do so now. I came upon the site in an entirely fortuitous manner while pursuing literary research. It is not the first serendipity offered up to me by Google, but it is the most interesting. The site immediately captured my attention. I am a sexually dominant man—a term I have used to learn, despite the fact that I regard it as a tautology, like “wet water”—with an amount of experience commensurate with my maturing years. I did once in the past make a tour of several D/s sites. Perhaps I simply came upon the wrong ones, but what I found usually offended either my intelligence or my sense of good manners. The more exhibitionistic and pornographic ones offended both at once! It is a genuine pleasure to come upon a group of lively, friendly, articulate, and generally unweird people who share an interest in a central reality of our sexual natures that, for obvious reasons, seldom moves out of the strictly private realm.

I haven't read all the articles linked to the site, of course, but I've read enough to be impressed by the comprehensive approach. Especially

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interesting to me is the fact that you have a sub-section exploring Christian perspectives on dominance and submission. It is quite amusing, indeed, to encounter on a website devoted to what most folks in the world would consider kinky and probably repellent sex, a warning to visitors that they might be offended by the religious language found there! Although I probably don't personally share the beliefs of the contributors to this forum, I view the Christian tradition with great respect; and I applaud the effort of contemporary Christians to bring fundamental aspects of their experience into alignment. One of the tensions imposed by a sexual personality often regarded as aberrant is the need to integrate the "behavior", mentally and psychologically, within the normal spectrum of other "behaviours". Furthermore it is my experience that any account of our sexual natures that omits what I am forced to call the spiritual dimension is doomed to inadequacy. What is spiritual may or may not be "religious", of course. For me the harmonies of a properly ordered relationship between a man and a woman have a spiritual beauty independent of any religious system or pattern of belief, though I have come to see that the mystery of genuine female submission can be usefully approached through religious myth.

It's an ill wind that blows nobody any good. One side effect of recent terror attacks in western countries has been that many people in Britain and North America, previously innocent of much knowledge of comparative religions, have heard or

read a good deal of elementary information about Islam. I for one was unaware that the root meaning of the word "Islam" is "submission" — submission, of course to the law and will of God. The superficially paradoxical idea that it is in submission of our wills to a higher power that human beings find contentment and fulfillment is of course a common one in other world religions as well. A classic Christian view is expressed in a beautiful line in Dante's "Divine Comedy" — "E la sua voluntade Ì"nostra pace" ("And his will is our peace", *Paradiso* 3.85). T. S. Eliot, among the greatest of modern Christian poets, thought this one sentence was perhaps the most profound in world literature.

Many of the great stories of the Bible, both in the Hebrew Jewish scriptures and in the Greek Christian writings, are accounts of extraordinary acts of submission. I think of Abraham, submissive even to his God's command that he should offer up his only son Isaac in ritual sacrifice (*Genesis* 22). This nearly incomprehensible gesture of submission provided the philosopher Kierkegaard with the emblem of one of his deepest books, *Fear and Trembling*. And according to his account of his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul says that a taunting divine voice from heaven rebukes him: "It is hard for you to kick against the pricks" (*Acts* 9.5). The meaning of this curious phrase, which has elicited unseemly and ribald laughter in many a Sunday school class, derives from the practices of ancient agriculture and animal husbandry. A spirited horse

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cannot be ridden until it is “broken” by a severe discipline. A plow-ox will at first rebel by kicking against the lash or goad of its master. Paul, until he submits to the service of Jesus, is like a rebellious beast.

Once sacred texts—the Bible, the Koran, and others—exercise little or no authority over most modern Europeans and Americans in general and, I suspect, over visitors to this website in particular. However, only the ignorant or the imperceptive will fail to see in the great myth systems of world civilizations fundamental psychological truths that transcend the historical and social conditions in which they came to birth. Since I am obviously headed in the direction of an analogy, it might be a good idea to remind ourselves what an analogy is: a comparison in which certain details fit very well and others not at all. When Robbie Burns wrote “My love is like a red, red rose” he meant that his girl friend was beautiful, fresh, delicate, and alluring. He did not mean that her skin was crimson or that she was covered with petals. In suggesting an analogy between a human being’s submission to the divine and a woman’s sexual submission to a man I am not suggesting the divinity of males. I am a man, and my sensibility accepts its responsibility for a commanding role in intimate relations in rather the same way my lungs accept oxygen, yet since I was twelve years old I have stood by in amazed awe at the near-divinity of women, the loveliness of their bodies, their hair, their voices, the delicacy and skill with which they perform daily tasks that to this day lie

beyond my capacities. Above all I remain awestruck at the overwhelmingly female facts of life—embryonic conception, gestation, parturition, mammalian nourishment.

My admiration is tinged with jealousy, particularly over the feminine capacity to experience pleasure in a range and intensity that appears to exceed by far my own. I have in mind principally the enjoyment of music and of the simple beauties of nature; but I also have the intuition that a woman’s sexual pleasure considerably overshadows that of a mere man like myself. This speculative topic, of course, could be put to an empirical test only by someone who had genuine sexual experience both as a man and as a woman. The only such person known to me is fictional: the ancient seer Tiresias of Greco-Roman myth. But his testimony was perfectly clear: the delight of the woman exceeded that of the man by a ratio of ten to one. My closest friends and most admired colleagues and associates have almost invariably been women. If I hesitate to say that such friendships are non-sexual, it is only because I think practically nothing about us is truly non-sexual; but they are free of explicit sexual content.

Perhaps my greatest admiration is reserved for the gracefulness and beauty of a woman’s surrender on those rare occasions when the right circumstances combine with the right chemistry to spark love. Here it is that the language of the religious paradigms I touched on earlier seems to me relevant. In fact our usual words “surrender” and “submission”, though they capture the

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reality of the woman's volitional yielding to a male power expressed both in physical and in psychological terms, can express but the lesser half of the mystery. There is, or at least in my opinion should be, a "merry war" between two lovers such as that so charmingly depicted by Shakespeare in *Much Ado About Nothing* in his characterization of Beatrice and Benedick. And if you have metaphorical war, you then have metaphorical arms, battle, victory and defeat, a conqueror and a conquered. But the proper experience of the act of female submission is not the bitterness of defeat but the exultation of fulfillment. The best analogues for this paradox come not from military history but from spiritual autobiography.

On the first page of his famous *Confessions*, an autobiographical soliloquy for which God is the audience and we readers mere eavesdroppers, Augustine wrote that "Our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee". There is an implied theory of human nature shared by many ancient writers, sacred and secular alike—a theory of moral alienation. We are all born as exiles from a homeland we have not seen but are hard-wired to desire. This view is shared in common myths of a Fall from some sort of primal innocence or perfection. In the beautiful story of Plato, sexual differentiation into male and female is itself a badge of imperfection. The act of sexual intercourse is for the individual as the institution of marriage is for society the expression of "a desire and pursuit of the whole"—a long-vanished androgynous unity. The

pagan Greeks and Romans had the beautiful myth of the vanished Golden Age. It was a time when Justice reigned, and the characteristics of human society were agrarian simplicity, honesty, and peacefulness. This blissful period ended forever when Jupiter rebelled against his father Saturn, castrated him, and threw the severed members into the sea, whence Venus, goddess of sexual love, rose full grown, as in the memorable painting by Botticelli. In the biblical account of the Garden of Eden the relationship of primal dereliction and sexual disturbance is even clearer. Only after their arbitrary act of disobedience, but then immediately, do Adam and Eve find themselves embarrassed by their nakedness, until then so naturally and innocently enjoyed.

How can one regain a paradise lost? Only through an act of striving that is simultaneously an act of submission, or, in the idiom of this website, by being taken in hand. No reasonably experienced man who has encountered true female submissiveness, unmistakable in its observation however difficult it may be of description, will be astonished by the paradox. The appetite for the feelings of tranquility and certitude that are the fruits of sexual submission are, I think, genetic, instinctual for all women; but the same thing cannot be said of the means of satisfying the appetite. Most women seem never to find it, and even self-realized submissive women often stumble around for many anxious years before achieving it. It is here, in my experience, that the intelligent and loving dominant man has a

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genuinely masterful role to play. I am deeply honored when a woman, at her request and with my considered permission, calls me Master. I recognize in the word those etymological associations of the master as teacher, trainer, and guide. It is unfortunate that the word schoolmaster has virtually disappeared from American English, and even more unfortunate that so many people, including several on this site, think that the natural complement of the word "master" is "slave". A woman entrusted to a man's mastery should be a beloved disciple, not an indentured servant. Again religious language hits the nail on the head. One of the prayers in the old Anglican Prayer Book speaks of obligations to a Master "whose service is perfect freedom".

A masterful man loves, cares for, nourishes and protects his woman very much in the manner that a trained and experienced teacher nourishes a star pupil. The higher the teacher's standards, and the more clearly the pupil demonstrates a capacity for growth, the more stern and insistent the disciplinary aspect of the relationship is likely to be. In terms of the purely sexual aspects—by which I suppose I here mean the frankly genital aspects—the man must train the woman to find pleasure through her uninhibited and unquestioning willingness to give pleasure. In an established and stable D/s relationship sexual intercourse, in terms of its frequency, is probably neither more nor less prominent than in any other sexual relationship involving a man and a woman. But as the most notable site

for the dramatization of the woman's submission in all its aspects, it achieves a unique level not merely of pleasure but of that satisfaction that goes so far beyond the physical that I find its description demands religious language. And once again in this mystery it seems that the submissive woman leaves the dominant man far behind. Hers is an ecstasy guaranteed by her own psyche quite independent of the variable and unreliable performance of her partner.

Perhaps the most famous statue of the entire Baroque period is Bernini's "Saint Teresa in Ecstasy". What a viewer of this remarkable work sees, quite unmistakably, is a nun heavily draped within the folds of a Carmelite habit, gasping in the throes of orgasm. That Bernini intended or that his ecclesiastical patrons found in the masterpiece a sacrilege is obviously preposterous. But since the most available vocabulary of human ecstasy is sexual, the sculptor naturally turned to it to suggest an ecstasy of a different sort. In like manner, I should suggest, a vocabulary first created to deal with religious experience may be helpful, again without sacrilege, in thinking about the sweet mystery of sexual submission. In the words of the immortal Fanny Crosby, an indefatigable hymn writer of the Victorian era who appears to have had a great sex life to supplement the literary exertions of her day job,

Perfect submission—perfect delight!

Visions of rapture now burst on my sight.

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Angels descending bring from above

Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.¹⁵⁵

"HOW DO YOU MAKE HOUSEWORK MORE FUN?" (9 AUGUST 2005)

Housework is misery, so I sing and dance while doing it. I have a big house, and chronic fatigue—a combination that pretty much guarantees that there's always a mess spinning out of control somewhere. If I hadn't figured out how to make cleanup tolerable, I'd have been sucked down beneath the waves long ago.

My housework routine is as follows:

1. Pick my battle. Which mess is pissing me off the most? Which one looks like the most fun to tackle? If there's no clear answer to either of those questions, which one is most pressing? Figure out where I'm going to focus my work, and gather appropriate tools.
2. Go find my tiara. No, I am not joking. I own a beautiful twinkly tiara worthy of Miss Canada. It is only worn when I clean house. When I sit down, it must come off again. But I feel so beautiful—and so silly—when I wear it that it actually makes housework sorta fun.
3. Turn on TV or stereo. The length of the program or album sets the length of my housekeeping session—usually between 30 and 60 minutes.
4. Clean for the allotted time. When the album or TV show is over, I am done for the day.

Doesn't matter if there's still more to do. It'll be there tomorrow, and I'll get to it then. (Overdoing is the best way there is to blow my limited energy reserves.)

Thirty to 60 minutes a day of this, plus every-other-week support from a housekeeper and a mandated one-hour full-family team cleaning blitz every Saturday, keeps the house generally presentable and the health department from taking a special interest.¹⁵⁶

"GIVING EACH OTHER WHAT WE NEED" (11 AUGUST 2005)

Trust and safety are major issues for many women: a surprising number of us seem to have had very dysfunctional relationships with authority in our lives, and are often very tough on the outside as a result of this. We tend not to surrender our submission until we know that our partner is worthy of our trust, and is able to keep us safe. When it does happen, the result is that we can drop our defenses—which often yields greater peace than we have ever known.

A man who is naturally dominant enough to assert his own boundaries and get what he wants in life inspires that sense of trust and safety. My husband is big, smart, handsome, and financially secure. Being with him means that, after a lifetime of taking shit from men, nobody will ever fuck with me again. That, right there, is more peace than I've ever had.

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Knowing that makes me want to give him my submission—and my gratitude. For us, as for many couples here, that gratitude includes giving him unfettered, unquestioned sexual access, instantly, upon demand. This is not a boundary I'm interested in defending against him in any way, so there is no whining or snottiness or grudging behavior allowed. Even if I'm tired, grumpy, or busy, the only answer this wonderful man ever deserves is YES, with a kiss and a smile.

This gift, from me to him, has transformed our lives. I think women shut down sexually when they're concerned that they can't trust their partner to give them what they want without vigilance and boundary-setting. Since I trust my husband in all things, I can surrender that worry—and so I don't shut down. With all that inner chatter silenced, I'm astonished to find that my body is constantly ready, hungry even, to accept his desire and pleasure.

I think a lot of men also experience their sexual needs as a burden: even married men are constantly worried about how they're going to get their needs met. They have to jump through all kinds of hoops to get women to have sex with them. It's exhausting—and, over time, it wounds their egos.

Which is why my husband reports an incredible sense of ease and peace since I gave him full access to me. He never worries about if or how he's going to get laid. That part of his life is now simple: he gets what he wants, when he wants it, how he wants it, when he wants it. No begging, no apologies, no guilt! It's

deeply validating for him as a man, and has greatly increased his confidence in the world. He says, "It's amazing to hang out with other guys, and know that I've got a love life at home that most of them can't even imagine. It absolutely makes me feel like I'm the top dog."

My Big Guy got this gift because he was willing to take me in hand—that is, set boundaries and standards, use his strength to defend me (even against myself), earn my trust, and keep me safe. I can trust him with total access because I know he will never abuse it (or me); and that he's the kind of guy who will reward the gift ten times over. We both know that if that trust were ever damaged, I would have to re-think the agreement. (If the relationship was going south, I suspect this would happen long before we ever got to the point of talking to lawyers.)

A lot of the comments up above reflect a lack of clarity about a) the role trustworthiness and safety play in taking a woman in hand; b) the fact that free access is a gift that can only be given, not taken (thus eliminating the legal concerns); and c) the sheer erotic force this kind of surrender opens up for both parties.

I hear a lot of women concerned about preserving their right to negotiate and set boundaries. That's fear talking—and me, I could never submit to someone I was that afraid of. But once the fear was gone, the need or desire to set that boundary vanished with it. What took its place was an almost constant arousal and desire for my beloved.

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I hear a lot of men who are confused about how to take a woman. You don't take her, guys: you inspire her to give it up to you. You show her she's safe. You make it clear that you're willing and ready to take charge of things that she finds aggravating. You let her know that when she's under your dominant care, she will want for nothing.

If you want a Taken In Hand relationship, find the right girl and give her safe haven. Win her trust. Make her safe. Show her that, in your world, the walls exist to protect her—and they will always hold. If you've found the right woman, she'll be so eternally grateful she'll never leave your side. And someday, if you're lucky, she may even agree to turn your love life into one lifelong, eternal YES.¹⁵⁷

"GIVE ME INTENSITY OR GIVE ME DEATH!" (12 AUGUST 2005)

For drawn to Taken In Hand, a conventional equal relationship can feel like a living death—a dull, grey, flat, boring blankness. Something is missing: verve, vitality, life. Something is missing: power, passion, concentrated focus, force. Something is missing: intensity.

A person without any intensity is not a person I could be with.

It is not that intensity alone is enough. There are plenty of bad intense people—narcissists, psychos, horribly co-dependent types, individuals whose intensity is not a force for good. It would not do to end up with one of those people. But if you

need intensity in a person, you need it.

"How foolish you are to require this!" shriek our critics. "At this rate you'll be single and celibate for life!" they gloat.

What these people fail to appreciate is that not everyone shares their particular preferences in life. For some of us, the alternative to being with a person who has intensity is not a relationship with a person who lacks intensity, but no relationship at all until the day we die. That, at any rate, is my preference. And I know other Taken In Hand folk feel the same way, though we may sometimes try to feel differently.

We try to squeeze ourselves into the conventional box with a conventional person who is happy in a conventional relationship, and it fails. We tell ourselves not to be so silly, to stop needing a relationship to be Taken In Hand, to be thankful for what we have, or to stop rejecting potential mates because they do not have the intensity and desires of a Taken In Hand person. We beat ourselves up for wanting what we want and for being who we are, just like some try to overcome their desire to be with someone they find attractive instead of someone they find repulsive. Some (very misguidedly) tell themselves that they are being "too superficial" in caring about physical attraction. We tell ourselves that we shouldn't want a Taken In Hand relationship. But what folly it is to pretend not to care about these things. How much worse it is to delude ourselves—how much worse for all concerned.

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Many of us have tried to create relationships with persons who lack the Taken In Hand fire—and failed. If you hardly ever meet anyone with the necessary intensity, you might begin to wonder if such individuals exist. You might wonder whether Taken In Hand and the thousands of people reading and posting on Taken In Hand are all a figment of your fevered imagination.

If the only intense individuals you meet are self-serving narcissists or crazy bunny boiler types, you might begin to wonder if your desire for a Taken In Hand relationship is entirely healthy. You might try to be happy with the person next door who is, after all, *nice*—except that there's something missing: intensity.

But then you meet someone who is kind and sane and reasonable, like the person next door, but who also has intensity and Taken In Hand tendencies that thrill you. And then you remember why you can't settle for the person next door. Then you know with renewed conviction why you feel so strongly that you would rather be single and celibate for life than settle for a conventional equal relationship with the person next door. Even if the relationship with the intense but sane and kind person does not work out, it can be a source of joy for you, helping you keep clearly in mind what you want.

When a person is right for you, they feel right for you. They add vibrancy and joy to your life, as you do to theirs; they do not make you feel flat, bored, annoyed with yourself for failing to feel what you are supposed to feel, or any other such depressing things. They do not seem

dull, numb, flat, lifeless. When a person is right for you, you do not have a nagging feeling that something is missing—and neither do they. The person may well be full of faults; there may be many problems; but they feel right nevertheless.

This is not to say that you should ignore glaring faults and commit yourself to someone unworthy on the basis on a foolhardy romantic notion that if it feels right it is right. But if it does *not* feel right, it isn't right. And if you are the kind of person who likes a bit of intensity in your relationship, and would rather be single and celibate until the day you die if you never meet someone who has that quality, then you might understand my title:

Give me intensity or give me death!¹⁵⁸

"BEING OPEN TO POSSIBILITIES" (15 AUGUST 2005)

There is a lot of talk around about whether Taken In Hand is right for everyone or whether all men want a Taken In Hand relationship or want to be dominant. I was thinking about this.

For me, it is not so much that I think everyone needs a male dominated relationship or a head of the household relationship or what not. It's not that I think that egalitarian relationships don't work. I think they work really well for people who want that kind of relationship, just as Taken In Hand relationships work well for people who want them. And I don't know what *most* people want or what is the majority.

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What I was thinking about is not that everyone should get Taken In Hand so that they can be happy like me. What I was wondering about was how many people could be happy or happier if they *were* Taken In Hand. I think our culture (American culture, that is, as that is the culture I live in) is really geared toward the idea that the only acceptable model of relationships is an equal one where everything is shared fifty-fifty down to alternating nights getting up with the baby and splitting housework right down the middle. I know that I labored under the idea that this was the ideal for many years and we were terribly unhappy for it.

Don't get me wrong, I understand the need to teach people what abusive relationships might look like, but have we gone too far?

What makes me sort of sad is not that I think that male domination is natural and if only every woman would get her husband to be the head of the household we could all live happily in a divorce-free world. What makes me sort of sad is that the majority of American culture is not aware of what a male-dominated relationship can be like.

If I were to tell most of the people I know, including my family, the nature of my relationship, they would assume I was being abused and controlled and that is even without the spanking coming into it at all, really. They wouldn't see that his headship of our family doesn't just mean that he gets whatever he wants (he doesn't). It doesn't mean that he is a selfish pig who orders me around and never lets me talk (he's not and

he doesn't). It doesn't mean that he is a bully who likes to push around little girls to make himself feel big. It doesn't mean that I am a weak-willed doormat who lets her man walk all over her (I'm not and you would think that the people who raised me to be this way would know that, but, oh, well). It doesn't mean that I bow to his every whim and that my needs are of no account.

If I were to tell the great majority of people I know IRL that my husband makes the rules and has authority to make the final decisions, they would, for the most part, assume I was being controlled. I will concede that. I *am* being controlled and I love it. They probably would not automatically assume that I am also cherished, protected, considered and adored. They would not see that he is obligated by his ownership of me just as much as I am. If I told many people that I ask my husband's permission for many everyday things, like buying lunch at a restaurant or using my debit card even to buy groceries, they would see a tyrannical dictator lording over his oppressed housefrau.

What they wouldn't see is a lovingly involved husband and his happily possessed wife who are crazy about each other and fall more in love every day. Many people wouldn't even see that as a possible outcome. They would only see me being abused and if I told them I am absolutely happy they would assume it is because I am brain-washed.

That is why I wish our culture was different. I don't wish that women were required to submit to their

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husbands because that is the natural order of things. I don't know anything about the natural order. I wish that our culture was open to all the possibilities of what a relationship can be. I wish that we, as a society, could see that consenting adults can structure their relationship in whatever way makes them both happy and it's totally healthy.¹⁵⁹

"MAKE EACH OTHER FEEL THE LUCKIEST PERSON ALIVE!" (16 AUGUST 2005)

In one of my favourite books about relationships, *Kosher Sex*, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach tells the following story:

Moments before I walked under the wedding canopy in Sydney, Australia, I went up to my mother and asked her to give me her blessing. She herself had had a very difficult marriage that ended in an acrimonious divorce thirteen years later. She took me by the shoulders, and then, wiping tears from her eyes, she spoke words which I shall never forget: "Shmuley, remember when you were a little boy and heard all those fairy tales about people living happily ever after? Well, they aren't just fairy tales. It is perfectly within your power to be a fairy-tale husband and to have the perfect marriage. It simply isn't true what they say, that you have to fight with your wife and every marriage involves struggle. Unhappiness isn't inevitable. Be the perfect husband, and make your wife feel that she is the luckiest woman in the world." These words, uttered to me by a woman who had endured a very painful marriage, but had never grown bitter or despondent, have helped me throughout my marriage.

Does the one you love feel the luckiest person alive? What have you done or said in the last 24 hours that might have made your love feel the luckiest person alive?

What is so sad is that it is often the smallest, easiest little things one person can do for or say to another that can bring this about, and yet so many couples don't bother. It seems so very short-sighted! We all want to be happy in our relationships: that means taking *action* to bring that about, on an on-going basis.

Rabbi Boteach also told the following story:

I remember when I first got engaged, and was plagued by all the usual doubts that accompany the big plunge into commitment and marriage, how an Australian rabbi whom I was friendly with saw me walking across the street in New York. With callous disregard for his own safety, he charged across the street, ran up to me, and gave me a big hug. "Congratulations," he said, "I just heard about your engagement. You are the luckiest man in the world. I worked with your fiancée when we were both teachers at a Jewish school in Sydney. She is the most amazing girl. I hope that my own children will one day find someone of such high caliber." He gave me another hug, and ran off. I remember thinking to myself, indeed, how lucky I was, which helped dispel the feelings of anxiety and melancholy that were gripping me at the moment. I also remember thinking what an amazing man he was, a truly righteous individual. One day when one of his children marry, I hope to be able to reciprocate this kindest of gestures.

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As well as making the one we love feel the luckiest person alive, we can, through small gestures like this, make others feel the luckiest person alive in their own relationships.

When you make someone else feel good, the smile on the person's face can often stay with you for a very long time, warming your own life, making you smile, and making you want to spread more happiness. And when you do that, you dramatically increase the chance of having good relationships in your life: you dramatically increase the chance that you will be deeply happy in your life. It is in all our interests to make each other feel the luckiest person alive.¹⁶⁰

"OUR JOURNEY THROUGH BDSM TO TAK- EN IN HAND" (20 AUGUST 2005)

J is a naturally dominant man, but we are both highly-educated professionals and our marriage was born out of a long-term professional friendship. So it began rather egalitarian. Over time, J has taken more and more of a leadership position in our relationship. It has been a beautiful experience.

Early in our relationship, my husband and I started playing sex games. Usually, I came up with a scenario and we played it on from there. Often there was some BDSM mixed in, to heighten the intensity.

I have been reflecting lately on all I learned about myself from our intimate relationship and assorted sexual adventures, and how it progressed to the relationship we have today. Before anyone shoots at me, I

am NOT saying I have a problem with BDSM or kinky sex, I just want to share things I learned personally about myself.

The first time J gave me a sound spanking was under the pretense of Daddy giving his naughty little girl a spanking. I remember trembling as he sat on the bed and told me to remove my pants. It was powerfully erotic. Yeah, it was kinky sex, but there was a fulfillment in surrendering control to a loving authority figure as well.

Then there was the day Alex and Jasmine were born. Alex was a wealthy and powerful landowner whose men had just purchased for him a new concubine. On that first day, Alex had come to take possession of an incredible prize. A beautiful spirited woman, a princess of her own people. She was HIS now, and he intended to teach her respect and submission. He wanted her for his own and would bring her into submission by force if necessary. He said to her, "I can be a kind and loving man, but I can be cruel to those who disobey me."

She fought him. On the second day of the game, she was taught that she would be punished for disobedience or refusal to submit.

On the third day, she was not punished, but told only to go to his bed, where he made love to her, as his own.

On a later date we brought back the Alex and Jasmine characters. This time Alex viewed Jasmine not as a valuable prize to be tamed for his will, but as a worthless sex slave to be used and degraded.

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The first Alex and Jasmine scene was gratifying to me. The second, even though it provided a release, and was erotic, left me feeling hollow inside.

It was a subtle distinction, but important from what I came to realize about myself from it.

The Alex and Jasmine game was truly just a way to try to experience feelings I wanted to feel in real life, with my real husband, by playing them out in a very exaggerated way. It wasn't that I was into pain (I generally avoid it) or pretend domination, I wanted to feel I was under the dominant authority of my husband, and I used these games to feel that.

I don't want to be property like Jasmine, but I want to feel that I am J's most prized possession. His treasure. His wife, only his, that he jealously guards with his love and protection.

I don't want to be a slave, that jumps at her master's every command while he lies on the divan. But I do want to be able to do what is expected of me. To serve my family as an expression of my great love. To live in an ordered household that has a clear leader: my husband. A leader who also serves his family, but who is unquestionably the leader.

I don't want to be beneath J, as an inferior, as a slave chained at his feet, but INSIDE him, where I feel surrounded by him physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He envelops me. I am part of him, as his own body. I am safe inside him.

I don't want to be forbidden to have any say or opinion about my own life, or to be punished for every mis-

take I make, but I want to be lovingly led. And I want him to have high expectations of me and to hold me accountable. Because he loves and treasures me.

I don't want to be forced into an artificial submission with whips and chains. I want to enjoy a real submission to J's very real masculine power and presence. This is manifest in the way we live every day, the way he leads me and helps me grow. It is in how we talk together and work together and worship together. It is in the way we make love. Sometimes it might mean he disciplines me, out of love because sometimes I need to physically, tangibly, feel his correction and dominance. Because there is something going on in me that I need to have brought into submission.

I am not proposing an end to imaginative sex—indeed, we may propose many more interesting games in years to come. It is fun for us. But I have come to recognize that Alex and Jasmine (at least in its original form) gave me something emotionally that I needed in order to feel complete as a woman. It was a way to feel certain things by playing an exaggerated game. I want to be J's most treasured possession, guarded with his life, nurtured and cared for, guided and led.

I feel calm and complete when I feel submission in my heart. It is just how I am made.

Knowing he has me right there in his hand makes me feel stronger and more secure as a woman.¹⁶¹

"THE NIGHT PORTER: MOVIE REVIEW" (7 SEPTEMBER 2005)

Set in 1957 Vienna, Liliana Cavillieri's film, *The Night Porter* is a disturbing, mesmerising psychodrama that viewers seem either to love or loathe. The majority who have written about it seem to loathe it, and one reviewer has even suggested that only individuals who have been sexually abused in childhood would enjoy this film, so it is with some trepidation that I say that *The Night Porter* is one of my favourite films. (And no, I was definitely not sexually abused in childhood!)

To be sure, this is not a film for everyone. Its subject matter is dark and difficult. The fascinating, if twisted, story is about the revival of an intense relationship that had started in a Nazi concentration camp—between Max, an SS officer and Lucia, one of the inmates.

Max is now, in 1957, a night porter in a hotel—the hotel that Lucia happens to visit with her husband, a conductor on an opera tour. Max works at night because he feels shame in the light.

Both Lucia and Max are visibly shocked to see each other again, but despite Lucia's consequent strange behaviour, her very nice but insensitive husband does not really notice. Perhaps it is the glaring contrast between her husband's lack of presence, passion and engagement with her, and Max's intense presence and engagement with her, that draws Lucia back in to the relationship with her ex-lover. Max "sees" her;

but to her husband, important parts of her are invisible.

Max himself is in conflict about starting up the relationship again, because he senses that if he does, all is lost. His Nazi colleagues are gradually "filing away" all who may have witnessed any of their atrocities, and the last thing Max wants is for them to get their hands on Lucia. Striking up the relationship again is fraught with danger for both of them.

But when, at the opera, he looks at Lucia, and Lucia cannot resist turning her head to meet his gaze (and at a point in the opera where the words being sung are about how love sweetens troubles and all creatures sacrifice to love), Max, too, is drawn inexorably.

Despite what some reviewers seem to think, *The Night Porter* is absolutely not a skin flick, and nor is it a Nazi exploitation flick. But if you dislike films that depict Nazi decadence and cruelty, you might be unable to appreciate or even see the most interesting, compelling themes of the film.

It is a film about a relationship. It is about the power of a human connection and a little tenderness in an extreme situation—and about the power of extreme situations to create passion. It is about the psychological power (for some) of an intense relationship over an ordinary, non-passionate one. It is about how *intoxicating* relationships having an element of control/power can be—and how intoxicating a mixture violence and loving tenderness can be. It is perhaps a warning about the all-consuming and potentially self-

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destructive power of an intense relationship.

It is also about the fact that even in the most frighteningly non-consensual situation imaginable, it is sometimes possible for a person to experience pleasure.

The relationship is not sadomasochistic in the sense you might imagine if you are familiar with the BDSM community. This film is not a pornographic movie. There are no explicit sex scenes in it. If it is sadomasochistic, its sadomasochism is more in the atmosphere and edgy tension of the film and in the psychology of the main characters than anything else.

The Night Porter has some very memorable scenes, and the acting of the main characters is superb. The subtlety and complexity of Charlotte Rampling's Lucia is staggering. It could have been played so badly, but Charlotte Rampling had the courage and the insight and the ability to give a breathtakingly brilliant performance, conveying strength as well as vulnerability, peacefulness as well as terror, intense desire as well as numbness, power and control as well as submission, lightness as well as darkness, heaven as well as hell.

Dirk Bogarde too appears to have put his heart and soul into his role as Max. The tenderness and love he conveys, along with the cruelty and deranged violence, the despair, the joy, the power, the control, and also irritation with his subservient position as a hotel night porter called to serve unworthy guests in trivial and onerous ways, and so many other things, is exquisite.

There are some wonderful shots of post-war Vienna, and the colour palate of the film is predominantly bleak greys. This, and the soundtrack, which has lots of silence interspersed with the odd mournful clarinet or oboe refrain, reflect and enhance the melancholic atmosphere of the film.

Liliana Cavani has an eye for psychologically difficult and tension-increasing juxtapositions. In one scene, we hear Mozart's pure and heavenly music about the higher purpose of love and man and wife, while a concentration camp guard buggers a male prisoner, presumably not entirely consensually! In another scene, there is the eroticism of a topless dance together with the ghastly truth that the woman is dancing for the concentration camp guards who hold her and may one day execute her. In another, there is extreme violence mixed with passionate love. It is these kinds of exquisite juxtapositions, and its taboo-violating themes, that make this film so disturbing—and so compelling for those of us who like that kind of thing.

The Night Porter is not a perfect film—for one thing, the ending is a bit weak—but it may nevertheless speak to some Taken In Hand readers. It speaks to me, anyway! [...] ¹⁶²

"THE MAN ORDERING FOR THE WOMAN IN RESTAURANTS" (8 SEPTEMBER 2005)

Since we began a Taken In Hand relationship, one of the things I have loved the most is when Rich orders for me in a restaurant. Of course, he

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asks me what I want before the server arrives at the table for the order. But he is the one who says, "She will have....." This is a huge turn on for me!

I also love it when he opens doors, asks me if I am chilly, or any of those gentlemanly gestures.

I guess these gestures are confirmations to me that he is there for me and concerned about my welfare. The ordering is a taking charge thing—he is speaking for me.

When he does or says these things for me, it makes me feel loved which definitely makes me feel more submissive which makes him feel more like a man, etc...etc...

It just all works together for me.¹⁶³

"HOW TO NOT TO PLEASE A TAKEN IN HAND CUSTOMER!" (9 SEPTEMBER 2005)

I know that some couples do not need or want simple shows of affection or even consider them affection at all. But in my world, those small actions do count a lot.

Gary has been ordering for me for a long time in restaurants. It started with my not being able to relax and trust he would do what was best for me. In my need for control, he recognized it was because I wanted to feel safe, and the only way I could get that security was to do things for myself. Well he went about changing that. What he did was say if I wasn't able to allow myself to be taken care of, he would move it to the next level. If I couldn't let him order my meal, then he would cut

the food up and feed it to me! Such lessons I learned back then.

I never had to experience that, but I did learn that he always asked me what I wanted, and how I wanted it—and then the restaurant found out and he insisted I got what I wanted and how I wanted it as well. And I learned to trust him to take care of me.

Now, when the choices are too many—he laughs as we eat out a lot—I tell him my choices 1, 2, and 3 and please decide for me. Any of them would be fine. And if I am not having a craving, he chooses where we go to eat out. But he also does open all doors, holds my hands at all times, puts on my coats, puts me in and out of the car, and my safety is secure always. As well as getting kisses, hugs and sweet touches all the time. And I am a vacuum for it all. And yes it does cause a more submissive trend to look for him to make my choices, with my input on favourites.

Last week on vacation he took me to this ritzy steakhouse. It was great and I was starving. Our server took way too long to get to us and he called the manager to complain. When the server finally showed up, she was in a big snit. She didn't like anyone complaining about her. So in her effort to "show him", when the time came for us to order, she asked me first.

When I looked at Gary, as he does the ordering, she told me, "Don't bother with him! In fact, he should be asking *you* for permission on what to have." So I gave her a long look that said "You are sooo wrong, so very wrong!" and smiled.

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She got it. She apologized in her own way and we got along. But there was no way I was going to let a waitress show him lack of respect. Especially since I'm not even allowed to do that! LOL! But when Gary comes into a room looking for me, and all I have to do is submit to his love, in all the forms it takes. It makes for a much stronger connection. Trusting he knows me so well to do things for me, it allows me the freedom to change my mind so he can pick up the pieces. Submission comes with its own brand of rewards sometimes.¹⁶⁴

"COMING UNRAVELLED (OR NOT)" (10 SEPTEMBER 2005)

Things have been a bit strained between my husband and me recently, since we moved from the place I'd lived in for almost all of my life, to the town he grew up in. I've been having bouts of homesickness and depression, getting upset rather easily and making sarcastic comments about the lack of amenities in our new location (it's 30 miles to the nearest Lush, for instance). Anyway, on Sunday night he got really angry, he seriously lost his temper with me for the first time in over a year and yelled at me in a fury.

I lay in bed that night feeling miserable and self-pitying as always after one of these episodes, thinking, "It's all coming unravelled, he's fed up with me, it's not going to work any more, the era of detente is over". I felt really depressed the next morning. He had to be away on Monday night, and when I switched on the

computer early on Tuesday to check my emails, there was one from him:

Subject: Love You

Hi, sweetie, I'm sorry I lost my temper. I'm really sensitive to the negative vibes I've been getting from you, as I really want you to be happy in our new home. I'll try harder not to fly off the handle if you'll try to give it a go here.

I felt happy and relieved and guilty all at once when I read this. He wasn't fed up with me and he did love me and I had been sending out negative vibes like mad—no wonder he'd got upset.

So I emailed him back, telling him I'd been sitting in the garden watching the seagulls flying over the hills, and thinking how nice it was (which was true) and that I did like it here really—and I ended, rather recklessly:

"I'm sorry I've been such a bitch. I will try not to send out negative vibes. I think you should beat me really, really hard when you get home tonight."

Naturally, he took me at my word and did just that. When I was whimpering in protest he pointed out, "You suggested I do this!"

"Yes, but it's one thing to suggest it when you're sitting at the computer, and another thing entirely when you're actually getting it," I explained.

But what I really felt, underneath the pain, was just relief, that it hadn't really come unravelled after all.¹⁶⁵

**"IS SPANKING ALWAYS SEXUAL?" (14
SEPTEMBER 2005)**

Is spanking always sexual?

For the benefit of new readers, may I stress that many Taken In Hand couples do not employ "discipline" in their relationships. Some ... enjoy other kinds of violent engagement but not "discipline", and many do not like any kind of violence, disciplinary or otherwise... But this article is relates to those who do employ "discipline" in their Taken In Hand relationship and would not want a relationship without punishment spankings or other "discipline".

I know that some Taken In Hand folk get exasperated with those who deny the eroticism of serious punishment spanking, and I myself have often argued that the emperor isn't wearing any clothes, but given that I am a person for whom the idea of being spanked is... well... entirely uninteresting, not my cup of tea (except when I read articles like this one),* perhaps I am in a good position to see both sides' positions, here!

...

On the one hand, there are those who are firmly in the "disciplinary spanking is definitely sexual" camp. On the other hand, there are those who believe that being disciplined is never sexual. Both groups want discipline in their lives.

As I argued in this series,[†] I think the truth is somewhere between (or perhaps different from either of) the two ends of the spectrum. Being taken in hand doesn't necessarily imply anything physical. It doesn't have to involve spanking. The idea of being spanked leaves some Taken In Hand folk completely cold, in fact. Some would not want to be taken in hand physically at all. Others enjoy being physically taken in hand but don't like "discipline".

Being taken in hand can be physical but it is primarily psychological. And when you understand its psychology, it is easy to see why for some individuals, it is vital that the spanking is serious, painful and non-sexual.

The absolute refusal to admit that there is anything sexual about "discipline" is functional in such individuals' psychology. They do not experience it as sexual, and they do not think of it as sexual, and if they did, it would immediately lose its power to create an intense sexual connection between the two individuals. These women enjoy feeling a little afraid of their husband.

The idea that they are married to a man who would not hesitate to use force to bring them (back into) to subjection is positively thrilling—as well as relaxing—for them. They are positively delighted that there have been (rare) occasions when their husbands have taken them firmly and forcefully in hand against their will and in such a thorough way that sex was the last thing on

* "Don't forget your whip," 27 August 2004.

[†] "Why is real punishment spanking erotic?" 22 February 2004.

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their minds. The dynamics between these women and their husbands would not be the same without this.

The knowledge that they really might be overpowered and forcefully and thoroughly and painfully taken in hand against their will is a very important part of what makes their relationship work. Many women fear that they will end up walking all over their husband. The knowledge that their husband will keep them in subjection using force against their will if necessary allows such women finally to stop worrying and relax.

When such a woman has been seriously, thoroughly and forcefully taken in hand, she is at peace. When she is taken in hand in that way, it banishes all possible doubt that the man is really in charge. It is no longer possible to retain doubts about whether or not the “unequal” nature of their relationship is real. It is absolutely and totally clear that this is not a game, and that her husband can handle her.

Conversely, if such a woman knew that her husband would never take her in hand forcefully and in that moment against her will, their relationship would feel too egalitarian; the two of them would feel too similar, no longer aware of the delightful differences between them. It would no longer feel as though the man were in control. It would feel to these individuals more like a game and less real.

So some Taken In Hand couples do want there to be—very occasional—serious, thorough, hardcore force against the woman's will at the time it happens. And some such

couples do not see the connection between these interactions and their sexual connection, and do not experience it as being in any way sexual.

The sort of interaction I have been discussing is, by its very nature, not something that happens every day. For most people, engaging in this kind of interaction on a daily basis would be exhausting and unpleasant. It would drive out the good feelings in the relationship instead of magnifying them. It might well be abusive.

Other Taken In Hand folk like spanking and want lots of it. Clearly, the daily spanking sessions they have cannot be the sort of interaction I have been discussing above. The emotional tone must be less intense and more fun, or at least less serious and more obviously positive and consensual. Indeed, for some of these Taken In Hand folk, the idea of the “non-consensual” interactions I have been discussing is absolutely appalling. They never have those kinds of interactions and would never want to. They need the consensual and sexual nature of their “disciplinary” interactions to be more evident in each and every encounter. These individuals engage in lots of “disciplinary spanking” but they experience it as being sexual, even at the time in some cases.

Another group of “discipline” enthusiasts who take the view that their spanking is not sexual do so because their “disciplinary” interactions have the appearance and style of CP role playing (for example, they talk about the woman “misbehaving”, “infractions”, “rules” and “consequences”, and the woman is

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spanked “over the knee” and may be made to stand in the corner like a “naughty little school child”) but in their psychology the spanking needs to feel (and be!) more real than it would do if it were just a role-playing game. If they think of what they are doing as being real and serious and non-sexual, that increases the power of the dynamic for them and allows them to maintain a more intense sexual connection than would be possible for them if they experienced what they are doing as being sexual.

Many Taken In Hand and DD individuals are also spankos, enjoying so-called “erotic spanking” as well as (what they experience as) “serious disciplinary non-sexual spanking”. Such individuals often feel the need to keep these two kinds of interaction separate in their minds. For some at least, if they do not maintain this distinction and rigid separation in their minds, all their interactions would effectively be of the spanking-for-fun variety, and the Taken In Hand aspect of their relationship would disappear, leaving them feeling decidedly frustrated and dissatisfied. So for some, maintaining that their “punishment spanking” is not sexual in any way, and experiencing it that way too, is an effective way of maintaining the Taken In Hand dynamic even in the mind of a woman who loves being spanked.

Moving on to another group, some experience being physically taken in hand as being non-sexual because in their minds being taken in hand is more about creating harmony between the two individuals than it is about creating a sexual connection.

These individuals are aware of the blissful peace they feel when they have been taken in hand physically, but they do not experience that as being in any way sexual. They feel safe, secure, loved, and protected, but not sexual. Yet this dynamic does bring them together as man and wife, and this is not the kind of thing they would feel comfortable doing with someone other than their husband, so I conjecture that the underlying unconscious dynamic is (partly) sexual.

In a few cases, being taken in hand is the only kind of “taking” happening in the relationship, and I conjecture that in at least some such cases, the “discipline” is effectively the “sex” in their relationship.

But this is all just my own speculation. Ultimately, we each have to experience these things in our own way, and how one person looks at it is unlikely to suit others. We are all individuals. The human mind is very complex, and expecting everyone to see things your way is unrealistic.* Whatever you do or don't do, and however you see it, enjoy your Taken In Hand relationship!¹⁶⁶

“MY REVIEW OF LAURA DOYLE’S ‘THE SURRENDERED WIFE’ (14 SEPTEMBER 2005)”

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **Is spanking always sexual?**]

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I've heard so much about *The Surrendered Wife*, by Laura Doyle, that I finally decided to read it.

Like all self help books I have encountered there is some sense to it but this one has a few glaring areas where Ms. Doyle (or should I say Mrs?) really goes off the rails.

She makes sense when she says there's no point in trying to correct a husband's every move. If they did it to us, we'd call that verbal abuse. And it's true that while he may not do things exactly my way I could cut him a little more slack. He cooks spaghetti with the pot cover on instead of off? No one has been poisoned by his pasta yet. (Hm, Poisoned by Pasta, great title for a mystery).

I'm not opposed to letting the man deal with the checkbook and finances though I strongly disagree with Ms. Doyle that this is going to absolve the wife of any worries over finances. That is nonsense.

If the couple is going through a financially strapped time she is going to worry about the lack of money whether she is balancing the books and paying the bills or not. I can attest to that. Also she doesn't mention that even if the wife has "surrendered" control of the money, she is still going to make a lot of the everyday shopping decisions and therefore it is still on her to choose wisely when money is tight.

She advocates not giving your husband any advice or input other than to say what you want and then leave it entirely to him to solve the problem and make sure you get what you want. So when your husband says, "Where are my socks?"

or "Should we invest in soy futures?" or anything of that sort, you're supposed to say, "I don't know," or "Whatever you think."

Now seriously, is this realistic and is this what he wants? If he's asking for your opinion, he wants to hear what it is. It seems to me that rather than be pleased that his wife is letting him take the lead, he is more likely to be annoyed and feel he has a lazy and uncooperative partner who will not at least help him or take part in decision making.

Then there's the matter of keeping your mouth shut when he takes a wrong turn, or makes some other really major error. What if the wrong turn took you hours away from a place you really needed to be? Would he truly be happy that you sat there like a Barbie doll with duct tape over your mouth and said nothing when you could have spoken up and saved him so much time and trouble?

I took a poll of various men I know and they all said that they would be most displeased if their wives sat there and kept quiet when they knew the husband was steering in the wrong direction. I'm afraid Laura Doyle is just sadly out of touch when she recommends a wife take this course of foolish inaction.

If you read *The Surrendered Wife*, as with any other book, take what works for you and leave the overboard nonsense behind.¹⁶⁷

"IS SPANKING NECESSARY IN A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP?" (18 SEPTEMBER 2005)

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I have a hard time understanding how a woman can be taken in hand without at least there being the possibility that her husband may spank her in order to bring her into subjection. I do not doubt that for some a taken in hand relationship does not need to include spanking. Most of us would agree there is much more to a taken in hand relationship than spanking. However, it is my opinion that most people who consider themselves taken in hand practice some form of physical discipline. The question is why?

In as much as we can all agree that the power of being taken in hand is dependent on the psychological and emotional connection between a man and his woman, it seems to me that a spanking remains an important part of the man's active control over her. The woman who desires to be taken in hand needs to feel his control in a physical way. A spanking is a tangible demonstration of his real authority. The pain visited on a woman's bottom has an immediate and very often deep effect on her mind and emotions. When spanked by the man who loves her, she opens to him, allowing his physical control to deeply engage her emotionally. This may not be a fair comparison, but to me a taken in hand relationship that did not include some form of physical discipline would be like living in a committed relationship without having sex. Is such a relationship possible? I do know of two couples who dearly love each other, but have sexless marriages. Would most of us want this for ourselves? I doubt it.

When a woman is taken sexually by a man who loves her and who knows how to handle her, her response is not just a physical one. As he penetrates her body, he affects her emotions too. She responds to him by thrusting toward him wanting more of him. And as her body opens to him, so do her emotions. He in turns delights in his mastery over his woman's body knowing every curve and how to make her quiver. The man who would have his way with her knows when to be forceful and when to be gentle. He knows how to use her for his pleasure, but gives back more in return. Yes, he may be able to move her with a look, but that look only makes her desire for his touch even stronger. For the woman being taken by the man she loves, is there a greater delight?

So it is when a man spansks his woman. Although it is a very different experience, with a different purpose, a similar "knowing" applies when he finds it necessary to discipline her. For some women, just the thought of this possible outcome is enough to bring her into subjection. Yet, when a determined husband takes hold of his wife, giving her the thorough spanking he thinks she deserves, most often, at some point, she will emotionally surrender to his control. And even if she is not normally submissive, she submits to his discipline feeling vulnerable and feminine. She acknowledges his mastery over her. Could the same emotional surrender happen without the spanking....perhaps. But just as in making love, where the physical and emotional intertwine, one

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affecting the other, so it is when a man spans his woman. She is both excited by and comforted in the knowledge that she has a man who knows how to handle her. She knows she is his.¹⁶⁸

“WE SHOULD CONSIDER OURSELVES SO LUCKY” (19 SEPTEMBER 2005)

I have been perusing this website for months now in utter fascination. Taken in Hand has given me both a name for my desires and a place to read the eloquent insights of like-minded people. It's amazing how things come to you at just the right time...

Throughout my life, I've always been attracted to “strong” men, or what I perceived as strong. As a young woman, I was fooled by the illusions of strength (muscles and arrogance) and found myself drawn to men whom I thought were right, but weren't. I had always been drawn to BDSM, but I now realize that this was just a small stop on my way to the truth. I now know that I don't want the illusion of power, or power confined to the bedroom, but rather the real thing, 24/7. But my journey to understanding the visceral power of true masculine dominance was a bumpy one.

In my teens and 20's I dated either the aloof bad boy type (mistaking his apparent toughness for strength) or the muscular weightlifter type (mistaking their physical prowess for internal strength). In both cases, it soon came to light that these men weren't in fact strong at all, but had developed a tough outer layer to

hide an inherent weakness. This always showed itself soon enough and left me feeling emotionally flat and sexually cold. The culmination of these relationships was my marriage to my now ex husband—a physically huge, muscular man with an outgoing, confrontational nature. What I soon came to realize, unfortunately, was that this was a facade to hide a very weak and insecure man who had been waiting for a strong woman to replace his mother and take care of him. Due to his inherent weakness and emotional fragility, I found myself taking charge of every aspect of the home, marriage, and business. Everything caused him stress so I often took care of things to avoid a scene. This left me emotionally resentful, spiritually hollow, and sexually cold. Year by year I gradually lost all respect and admiration for my husband who went merrily along his way enjoying the ease of life my emotional strength and control afforded him. I fell into a deep depression and wondered what had happened to our marriage. How did I marry such a narcissistic baby? How could I have so misjudged my needs and desires? I finally ended our marriage feeling emotionally drained, taken advantage of, and sexually dead.

What brought me back to life was a combination of things. First was the realization that, although I am a very strong and capable woman, I actually need a man who exceeds me in both intelligence and emotional strength, who is able to take care of me and be as eager to meet my needs as I am to meet his. It was not the physical trappings of

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strength I was looking for, but rather the commanding presence and quiet confidence I've read about so often on the Taken in Hand website.

All this became crystallized for me as I became involved with a man who is undoubtedly the love of my life. He was a friend for many years and I had always admired his ability to be both dignified and commanding at the same time. I always felt an intense spark of vitality around this man. He made me feel more alive and aware of all my senses, just by his presence. What I came to understand was that his quiet and controlled internal strength and masculine presence made me feel ultra feminine. This was a revelation to me and sent me on a journey to reconnect with my more feminine and submissive side. The masculine/feminine contrast between us creates a dynamic that is intensely hot and impossible to resist. The results are astounding and are not confined to the bedroom. I find it, at the same time, unbelievably exciting and incredibly relaxing to finally relinquish control to a man.

While we do enjoy a playful or erotic spanking, and immediately realize the larger sense of control that it signifies, we do not engage in discipline spanking. I do understand how this may be deeply comforting for some, but for us, the same sense of peace can be reached by me curling up on his lap while he strokes my hair. Or by constantly taking my hand in public. Or by ordering for me in a restaurant. Or by simply whispering, "That's a good girl" Yum. Personally, I find the dispute over whether discipline need be

involved in a Taken in Hand relationship to be superfluous. Each person's control triggers are so different.

My love is a profoundly thoughtful and caring man who understands me and never makes a decision without my needs in mind. He is firm without ever being defensive or losing his temper. He is dominant without ever being domineering. I believe that this is the key to a Taken in Hand relationship and why many people can't understand the dynamic—because it's rare to find such a selfless man who lives to please you, yet is still a strong dominant figure. He's a man whose ego gratification doesn't depend on being a domineering bully. It takes immense strength of character to be this type of man. I find it so sad when people write in to the website to say that they would never let a man make decisions for them or that they don't understand the white-hot connection involved in this type of relationship. What I know is that they have not found that rare type of man who brings them to life and makes them feel like a real woman.

I am constantly surprised by the intensity of my reaction to my love. When he opens doors, puts on my coat, makes sure I have money in my wallet, plans a vacation, or cooks me a beautiful dinner, I feel cherished and totally taken care of. This, in turn, makes me want to please him all the time and in every way. That I tell him, "I'm yours whenever you want me" is extremely erotic for us both. His mere presence makes me weak in the knees and constantly hot. But I know that this is rare.

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Women growing up today are so conditioned to believe that there should be no difference between the sexes, that we have almost become a gender-neutral society.

I feel sorry that most people have to miss out on or simply don't understand the intense pleasure of high gender contrast relationships and extremely blessed to be living a dream come true. Most people, I'm sure do not feel so emotionally and sexually fulfilled. While I realize that this may not be necessary for everyone, I hope that Taken in Hand regulars understand that they are among the lucky few.¹⁶⁹

"AN OVERVIEW OF TAKEN IN HAND" (19 SEPTEMBER 2005)

Taken In Hand relationships are wholehearted sexually-exclusive marriages in which the husband wears the trousers and is firmly in charge (to his wife's delight!)—and he always puts his wife and their relationship first. Putting her and the relationship first is the key to creating a marriage in which the man is in control in a good, healthy and sustainable way.

Taken In Hand is neither all about the man, as in some D/s relationships in which the man has control, nor is it all about the woman, as in some DD relationships—it is for both. Neither spouse is a self-absorbed narcissist.

The wives in Taken In Hand relationships tend not to claim to be submissive (though their husbands may well consider them to be so) but they do strongly prefer *not* to be the

one in charge in their relationship, and they do respect, honour and appreciate their husbands and strive to please them.

The husbands in Taken In Hand relationships tend not to claim to be dominant (though their wives may well consider them to be so) but they do strongly prefer to be the one wearing the trousers in their marriage, and they do enjoy dominating and submitting their wife when necessary to maintain their position—and indeed for the pure fun of it.

Taken In Hand is about using the power of a white-hot sexual connection to create a rock-solid permanent bond between husband and wife. It is intended to be *fun* and *sexy*, not a duty or a burden. If you don't find the idea of Taken In Hand exciting or at least strangely attractive, it is not for you. Taken In Hand is not compulsory!

Click on the links in the contents lists below for further information:

What kind of relationship is this?

- It is wholehearted, fully committed, focused, faithfully sexually-exclusive and monogamous
- The man has the balance of power and control
- The man's control is thoroughly consensual and welcome
- The control is for the benefit of both individuals and for the relationship, as opposed to being abusive or purely self-serving
- It is dynamic and evolving, not a static or stereotypical relationship
- It is deeply connected and engaged and intimate
- The relationship empowers and nurtures the autonomy of both

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individuals, as opposed to diminishing the woman.

- It is freely chosen and wanted on an on-going basis, or it is not a Taken In Hand relationship.
- **What are the people like?**
- Taken In Hand individuals are just that: individuals; they are not stereotypical
- The men—kind and caring, not self-serving narcissists, but firm too
- The women—strong and competent, not weak or wimpy doormat types, but not domineering misandrists either
- You and me—ordinary people—your neighbour, your sister, the chap you work with, your best friend
- The husband is more likely to think of himself as being in charge, wearing the pants, or as being a bit bossy, than to call himself “dominant”
- The wife is more likely to think of herself as just a normal fallible human being who loves her wonderful take-charge husband, than to call herself “submissive”
- **How does it feel?**
- Taken In Hand feels liberating
- Taken In Hand feels natural and right
- A deep feeling of peacefulness
- Amazing communication
- Problems seem easier to solve
- Improved/intense sexual connection

What do people say about it?¹⁷⁰

“WHAT CAUSES CONTRITION AND CRYING?” (20 SEPTEMBER 2005)

I can't imagine spanking making me feel sorry about anything. Either I'm sorry about something or I'm

not; no amount of whacking could make a difference to me. “Contrition comes from a heart place, not from a fire in the bottom,” as someone said to me today.

Yesterday, for example, my husband came home after spending a few days working in the States to find the house in a total mess. I had taken the children away for the weekend to stay with a friend. I'd meant to tidy up before we went on the Friday, but I hadn't, and I had come home on Sunday night too tired to tidy up. I'd meant to do it on Monday after taking the children to school, but then I had to stay with the third son because he wouldn't let me go, then after I collected him from school we went to the playground until it was time for the second son to come out, so I didn't get home before my husband did.

He came up to meet us at the playground, and I felt slightly apprehensive, but after kissing us, he just said amiably to me, “We need to have a little talk when we get home.” He went on to discuss the state of the house, and I felt relieved that he hadn't blown his top with me. This, in turn, made me feel guilty and ashamed that I hadn't bothered with the tidying up, and when I said, “I'm sorry,” I really meant it. Then I started crying, and he got worried that he'd upset me by telling me off, but he hadn't, I was touched and guilty and remorseful and a combination of these and other emotions made me cry, which no amount of spanking could have.

I got the fire in the bottom all right, later on, but that wasn't what caused the contrition. If I wasn't already

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feeling compliant and remorseful, being spanked just wouldn't work for me.¹⁷¹

"A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP REACHES BEYOND THE COUPLE" (21 SEPTEMBER 2005)

Early on in my relationship with Gary, I had no idea what submission really meant. I was recovering from a very serious operation, and I had no concept of what recovery really meant. I was gung-ho for getting as much as my life back as I could, quickly. Gary was adamant that I should get as much rest as I needed.

In retrospect, he was very much right. But I was stubborn, and had no idea of what being taken care of meant yet. So he put limits on my activities: one activity a day, and only with his permission so he would know if I was going to hurt myself trying or not. Now back then, even taking a bath needed the aid of my homemaker. So you get the drift, everything was a hazard to me. And one fall would put me right back in the hospital.

But life kept on happening bed ridden or not, and eventually, after one commitment too many, Gary put a huge punishment on me. I had to call him after any phone conversation I had, after any visitor, after just about anything that remotely resembled a decision. And I was not allowed to make a decision without a discussion with him!

I was mortified. How do you tell your physiotherapist that you had to make a short call before you can schedule your next date?

Needless to say, I was not perfect at calling Gary. It's almost impossible to not make decisions, small or big, and call each time. But such was the nature of the punishment. On the third day of this, I had just received a phone call from a neighbour who was just going for her final examinations in Reflexology, a form of massage. She had to do certain amount of "Practical Time" to pass, and the sessions were of no charge. She knew I was not well and she wanted to practice her skill on me: her effort was to help, and she wanted me to schedule a date.

Well...I made an appointment. But then I had to call Gary and tell him. Frankly I tried to bamboozle him. But he's not easily led astray; his mind is built for big business. So, finally, in complete misery, I told him the truth and why. He was completely quiet on his end of the phone. In utter dejection, I asked him what he was going to do with me. I mean, I had disobeyed with intent, there.

His answer? He knew I felt bad. And he also knew that I was not likely to forget this anytime soon. His response to me was this: "Now is not the time to come down on you. You feel bad enough. We can talk about this another time when we are together. Thank you for telling me the truth. I love you." And I started to cry. But it also led me to plead for this punishment to be taken off, which it was.

This set the tone for our relationship. To this day, he has never been hard on me when I make a mistake. It does get resolved, but I have no fear. And in turn, I do not come

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down hard on others when they make mistakes. It's often shocking when I lend support to someone when they know they are in the wrong. But that is my own personal idea of how a Taken In Hand relationship reaches beyond the couple to include others in the positive aspects.¹⁷²

"HOW CAN I BE SURE HE'S MONOGAMOUS?" (24 SEPTEMBER 2005)

Someone asked me the other day: "How can I be sure he's monogamous?"

But what she really wanted to know was how she could be sure that he would be faithfully sexually-exclusive with her and her alone, as opposed to promiscuous.

People often mistake the question of whether to be monogamous or non-monogamous (or polyamorous or polygamous) for the question of whether or not to be promiscuous. But plenty of monogamous individuals are promiscuous, and plenty of poly folks strictly limit themselves to a couple of lovers. The word "monogamous" is ambiguous. It has a number of different meanings, only one of which necessarily implies "not promiscuous". I certainly know individuals who consider themselves monogamous but who reserve the right to engage sexually with others. And many married people who claim to be sexually exclusive and faithful to their spouse are in fact very promiscuous.

So if you want to be sure you are on the same page, you need to ask explicitly whether the other person

prefers one-to-one sexually-exclusive relationships or whether he or she prefers a more inclusive or more open arrangement.¹⁷³

"TAKE HER IN HAND WITHOUT LIFTING A FINGER" (26 SEPTEMBER 2005)

Today was a perfect example of how well taken in hand has worked to improve our marriage.

I laid down for a nap and woke up much later than I planned. The only issue was I needed to be up in time to get us all ready for an afternoon barbeque we were attending at the lake. Well I woke up a half an hour before we needed to leave after a very long nap. When I came out I was very annoyed with my husband because he hadn't bothered to wake me up. No one was ready, nothing was packed for the lake, and no food was ready to take. Basically we needed to leave in 20 minutes and we were nowhere near ready to go. Then in addition to that my husband didn't seem to care in the least. I was incredibly mad that he hadn't bothered to wake me up or begin getting things ready for the lake.

So I had a choice to make. I could get really annoyed. I could be bitchy and bossy. I could rant at him for having the nerve to be so indifferent. I knew I would get into quite a bit of trouble if I did give into my temper. Yet when I am that mad don't always care. But somehow for the most part I controlled myself. We began to get ready to go. I made a rude comment to my husband as we were discussing how we had no food ready to take with us. My

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comment was "Well yeah, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that we don't have time to stop at the store now!" Of course he didn't appreciate my attitude and he said, "Alright, that'll be enough of that now!" I was surprised. He took me in hand verbally in a way that he has only recently mastered. Then he came over and made me look him in the eye. He informed me that I had better watch my attitude. I said ok meekly and went on my way.

He sat there not really helping for a few minutes. I managed to politely ask him if he would help me do A and B. He was glad to help. We continued getting things together in a hurry. I managed to find food we could bring that we had on hand. We got the beach toys out. It seemed he was in my way wherever I went. He was really getting on my nerves but I didn't go into my usual snit. Because I held my temper he was able to hold his temper as well. We both managed to get through the afternoon without a major blowup.

As we were putting things in the trunk he again quietly reminded me to mind my attitude. He reminded me that he was in charge and I wasn't to go around being bitchy. We drove to the lake in relative quiet. We still weren't on good terms. I was still mad because we were running late but I held my tongue. He held his tongue as well. He isn't generally verbally obnoxious as long as I'm not ticking him off.

We had a lovely time with our friends at the lake. We had a family come over after the lake to chat with us a while longer. After they left we

worked together to clean up the dishes and get the kids to bed.

Why was I able to control myself instead of going into my usual rant? It wasn't because I would surely be taken in hand physically if I didn't control my temper. That was in my mind but that wasn't the main reason. I think it was because I had been practicing.

Being taken in hand has forced me to control my temper better. Now I am in the habit of controlling myself. I am in the habit of not saying mean angry things to my husband. I am in the habit of staying respectful and kind. I am in the habit of politely requesting his help with things. He is always willing to help me if I ask kindly. He is not angry with me if I am not bitchy with him. He is also in the habit of minding his temper better. He is much more likely to give me a calm verbal reminder or a calm physical reminder than to spew caustic words at me like he used to do at times. He controls his temper as well as helping me to control mine. I control my temper and by doing so I help him to control his. We rarely ever have major blow out fights anymore. We both manage to act like mature adults.

I didn't get spanked. My husband took me in hand without laying a finger on me. His firm words were the only reminder I needed. I was reminded I was his woman and he wasn't going to take any attitude from me. We worked together as we should and ended up having a wonderful day together.¹⁷⁴

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"WHO WANTS A SLAVE?" (27 SEPTEMBER 2005)

I am very troubled by the idea of a Taken In Hand wife as 'slave'. I see no benefit in keeping a woman enslaved. I married my wife because I wanted her—much as she wanted me—not because I wanted to be waited on hand and foot.

While Taken In Hand relationships prove mutually beneficial, enslavement is mutually destructive—corrupting the man while destroying the woman. Spanking has both the power either to do good or to do evil. The power is in the words of the man rather than in the force of his hand.

To both tyros and interlopers, the techniques used to enslave a woman seem identical to those used to liberate her. They fear because they lack discernment.

There have been two times in our marriage when I turned my wife into psychological putty. Either time, I could have done anything with her—including destroy her—as the decadent *Sir Stephen* did in *The Story of O*. Instead, I chose to do good rather than evil.

Knowing the power of accumulated spanking over time, I have often counselled women to choose their men wisely. A woman must know what is in a man's heart. It is imperative for a woman to find out what a man will do with his natural power over her. She must not be deceived.

At the same time, deep inside, a Taken In Hand woman needs to know the man in her life can handle her. While the man must be able to

control the woman, he must also be able to control himself. Often men are reasonably competent in controlling one but not both aspects. Women require both.

What a Taken In Hand woman needs—and most probably wants—is a man able to bring about the best in her by giving her support where she needs it and correction when required to improve the relationship. At the same time, the man has to need what the woman has to offer enough to cherish—even worship—the woman as the ultimate gift in his life. The woman must know that the man in her life cares about her.

Satisfactory marriages are built on being able to do something together that neither could have accomplished separately. This is not best done through enslaving the woman. Slavery occurs when one person sees another as inferior. It is the antithesis of respect. Only an insecure man wants a slave.¹⁷⁵

"BELIEVE IT OR NOT, SHE REALLY WANTS YOU TO ASSERT YOURSELF!" (28 SEPTEMBER 2005)

When your wife agrees to submit to your authority, she needs to experience, both emotionally and physically, what it really means to have you be the master in your marriage. Demonstrating that you mean business, either through eye contact, a firm tone of voice, or, if need be, a spanking (in cases of outright disobedience or disrespect) gives her a very powerful message. If you never applied this principle, she couldn't help but wonder (whether she ad-

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mits it or not!) if you were really her leader at all or just one in name only.

More importantly, don't feel guilty for asserting yourself in this way, especially if what she really needs at the time is to feel that you are physically in control. In fact, by insisting that she surrender to you in this way before the relationship is made to suffer, you are helping her to do what she could never do on her own, especially in the case of a strong-willed woman. This point is crucial: by agreeing to be in a Taken In Hand relationship, she has entrusted you with the authority to decide what is best for her and for the relationship, including the element of control over her body.

Be aware that she'll probably still rebel sometimes, most often with regard to matters in which there has been previous disagreement between you. Remember that she has been used to the idea of getting her own way by continuing to insist until you gave in to her way of doing something. But, deep down, she knows that, by submitting to your authority (even if that means physically submitting), she is putting her marriage ahead of her pride. By literally putting herself (whether or not she is willing at the moment) in your hands, she is showing you that her body belongs to you. She is also sending you a powerful message that she considers your relationship to be more important than any disagreement or other issue you might have. By swallowing her pride, she is, in effect, raising a white flag of surrender—a clear symbol of her commitment to you.

So, remember: even though she might be outwardly fighting the idea of your control today, inside she has already decided that she wants and needs you to be strong—no matter *what* she is doing now that may seem contradictory. Moreover, your active dominance and her natural submissive response will work together to enhance your marriage. And, after all, isn't that what this is all about?¹⁷⁶

"HOW WE HAVE STAYED HAPPILY MARRIED FOR OVER 30 YEARS" (29 SEPTEMBER 2005)

My husband and I have been married for over 30 years and every day that I get up in the morning I am so glad that my husband is who he is. There have been good and bad times. Life has not always been easy—we disagreed plenty of times before Taken In Hand—but we have always been committed to talking through the issues that come up, whether it is financial or something of a more personal nature.

We have been in love with each other since high school. When his father retired from military service the whole family moved to another state. We were both devastated! Life went on and we fell out of contact for a short time; then he wrote to me. We remained friends through letters for quite a while but then realized that we were both still in love with each other. He had joined the military and was overseas while on a tour of duty. After we had not seen each other in well over two years he came to visit me during the holiday

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season. I can still see him standing there in the airport; and our relationship resumed just as if we had never been apart. That was in 1973. We married the following summer.

Something that can be a sore spot for people is talking about sexual issues. We were both virgins when we married. It was important for us; we wanted it that way. We have both known people who have had many partners before marriage and that is not something we wanted. We loved each other and we wanted commitment.

In marriage there are challenges. It is easy to stay together when things are going well but what about those hard times? Do you stay or do you leave? And I understand that there are times when marriages don't work, and then, as when there is violence in the marriage or infidelity, it is vital for the people involved to walk away unless that impediment can be removed.

I believe that if you want your marriage to work, it is important to realize that there are marriages that do work. You also need to be realistic. People seem to always want things to be perfect and they just aren't. This is real life. Things happen. But what makes a marriage work through difficult times? Commitment to love one another no matter what!

For a marriage to work the couple involved in the relationship must decide together in the beginning what it is that they need. Some people don't want children while the other person does. Others we have known have wanted a strong financial plan before moving into mar-

riage. Depending on the person or the couple that may take several years before that goal is actually a reality. Others feel that love is all they need. Don't ever get into a marriage and think you are going to change that person. Only that person can do that. It is a choice; it cannot be a forced issue.

Through the years, we have seen some friends with great marital difficulties and it breaks my heart to see what they go through. Selfishness is something that I have seen as a common denominator. Selfishness doesn't work in any relationship, married or not; it has no part of love or commitment. None! For us marriage is not 50/50, it is 100%/100%.

It is our love for one another, our devotion, dedication and our belief in God that keeps us together. I am so in love with my husband and each day that we are alive I am so grateful to be together. We see ourselves as soulmates. Each and every day I am so excited to be with him and he with me. I just love to gaze at him.

There was a time this year that I was seriously ill and my husband was sitting in the emergency room himself sick (not the same illness) and he was planning my funeral while sitting in the corner of the room.

I no longer work at my job because the stress level was too high so we talked about it and he told me to quit. So I did. I am discovering myself and I have found that exiting from the rat race is very healthy for me. I enjoy being at home, taking some time for myself. I haven't done that in years. My husband saw what

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was best for me and I appreciate that so much. He is in charge and I love that. I love our Taken In Hand relationship and I love how he loves me. I am so very thankful that I am still here and I thank God every day for my husband and our family. For me that is what life is all about. It isn't about petty things, it is about what really counts.¹⁷⁷

"A DEEP AND SATISFYING MARRIAGE" (6 OCTOBER 2005)

My husband and I have a deep and satisfying sexually exclusive relationship. I can't imagine being anything but this.

I know there are people who prefer a variety of relationships and that is their choice. However for us we made a commitment to one another years ago and plan to keep it until death do us part.

Through the years I have heard other discussions concerning marriage and sex and sex without marriage; and how those who remain only faithful to one spouse must be bored with their sex life.

Personally I cannot imagine having a sexual relationship with anyone but my husband. Nor would I ever be interested. He knows me so intimately and our commitment is a covenant to us.

We are very happy and since we now have a Taken In Hand relationship our marriage satisfaction has increased and it keeps growing. Perhaps in the very beginning of our marriage we were very naïve we didn't stay that way.

Our love and desire for one another grows daily.¹⁷⁸

"DO YOU 'MEET AS EQUALS' OR 'ESTABLISH ROLES FROM THE OUTSET'?" (6 OCTOBER 2005)

If you want a relationship in which the man is in control, what does this imply in terms of how you should behave when the two of you first meet and get to know one another?

The answer to this question (which was asked on another internet forum recently) may be perfectly obvious to most Taken In Hand folk, but apparently it is not obvious to all, so let's look at the arguments.

If you are a single Taken In Hand woman who has met one or two "dominant" men (not to be confused with Taken In Hand inclined men), you will probably have had what I'll call for short, the OYKB experience, which is to say, you meet a man, and the first thing he says to you is, "On your knees, Bitch!"

"I beg your pardon?!", you say, hoping that you have misheard him—and then you instantly regret your response, because he repeats himself, and with more vigour.

It might not be that particular thing that he says. It might be any number of other orders. He might order you not to speak, or to address him as "Sir", or he might even order you to perform a sexual act. The idea is presumably that in a relationship, he wants to be in control and he wants you to accept that control, so he expects you to demonstrate your willingness to accept that control

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from the moment you meet, or before, if you “meet” online.

Similarly, many women take the view that if a man does not start bossing them about as soon as they meet, he doesn't have it in him to control them, and they move on to the next man.

You may have read on other forums (i.e. D/s sites, not Taken In Hand) statements like: “If you meet as equals, you won't be able to see one another as dominant and submissive respectively, and you'll only ever be egalitarian vanilla friends.” or “If you want a D/s relationship, it is important to establish the roles from the first meeting.”

To Taken In Hand types, this argument sounds crazy. For a start, the woman in a Taken In Hand relationship is in no way less than the man, and as such, she should not be treated as such. She is, in a deep sense, thoroughly equal. Secondly, if you want a Taken In Hand relationship—which implies a deeply committed, sexually-exclusive relationship as opposed to something more casual—the rational, safe, and sane thing to do is to get to know the other person thoroughly before the man starts exerting significant control.

A relationship does not spring into life ready formed from the first moment; it takes time to develop. It starts from no relationship, when you first meet, and gradually, if all goes well, the two of you together jointly create connections and form a relationship, and it continues to evolve over time. There is no shortcut to creating a real and lasting relationship.

Acting *as though* there is a relationship when in fact there can't yet be, amounts to faking a relationship. This is fine if that is what you want, but if what you actually want is a real relationship, acting the role of a person in a relationship where none actually exists will be unsatisfying for you, and you will not want to “establish the roles from the first meeting”, you will want to “meet as equals” (if we accept this problematic terminology for the sake of argument for a moment).

But what about the argument that if you “meet as equals”, you won't be able to see the other person as anything other than a conventional egalitarian person with no feeling for Taken In Hand dynamics?

This concern is conflating two issues. The idea of “meet as equals” could mean presenting yourself as a person with a preference for conventional egalitarian relationships, but in this context it does not mean that at all; it means *not presuming a relationship where none exists*. The fact that you may be a woman who wants a relationship in which the man is in control does not make you a person with the superhuman power of creating a relationship instantly, any more than the same is true of a man who wants to be in control in a relationship.

Wanting a relationship with a take-charge man does not imply that it is natural or a good idea to act as though the man is in full control of the woman from the moment one meets. One of the things I look for in a man is respectfulness, and some sense of civility and courtesy. I want a man who, as well as being thor-

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oughly able to handle me, knows how to behave in polite society. I want a man who does not presume my consent where none exists. I want a man who has the patience to give me time to get to know him really well at arm's length, and who will not act the part of my lord and master unless/until I give him that right.

When a man starts ordering your average single Taken In Hand woman around as though he already has that right when he doesn't, she finds that highly presumptuous and inappropriate behaviour and wonders why the man wants to act as though there is a relationship already in existence when there plainly isn't. I personally am instantly put off by such bizarre behaviour. The last person to whom I would want to give control would be someone with bad manners and a casual disregard for consent.

Another thing to look for in a man is self-control. If a man has the ability to control himself, he may well have the ability to control the woman too. And if a man is going to have real control in a relationship, he had better have self-control. If in early meetings a man appears to lack self-control, patience or the ability to treat the woman with respect and civility, a woman might quite reasonably conclude that he is not the man for her.

"Meeting as equals" as opposed to acting as though there is a full relationship where none exists does not in any way imply pretending to be someone other than you are. Taken In Hand women don't act as though they prefer an egalitarian relation-

ship, they just don't allow themselves to be controlled by any old Tom, Dick or Harry, and they would not want to be with a man who would expect that. And similarly, men with the potential to be a Taken In Hand husband don't act as though they want an egalitarian relationship, they just don't presumptuously take control in the absence of a relationship in which they have the right to do that.

Behaving naturally instead of playing a role really doesn't result in not being able to see the other person as dominant, etc. These things can be expressed in subtle ways and through civilised conversation.

For some Taken In Hand people, one subtle way men give the impression that they do not want a conventional egalitarian relationship is through small and appropriate acts of chivalry. A man can be very respectful and even a bit shy, but if he opens the car door for the woman, walks on the outside as they walk along the road, and gently leads the conversation, then even though he does nothing overtly dominant, a woman can sense that he would want to be in a non-egalitarian relationship. A man can be kind and gentle and sensitive to a woman's wishes, and behave absolutely appropriately and not at all presumptuously, and yet still—just through the way he carries himself and little things he says—convey his preference to wear the trousers in a relationship.

When the two individuals are in the restaurant, the man can ask the woman what she would like to eat and drink, and then order for her

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when the waiter arrives. When they are walking down a flight of stairs the man can walk down first, and when they are walking up the stairs he can say "Ladies first" and walk behind her, in accordance with traditional etiquette.

When they know one another better, they might talk about or allude to what they want in a relationship, and it is perfectly possible to get a sense of a man's desire to be in control just from the expression on his face as he talks about this, and it is perfectly possible for a man to see that a woman is responding positively to the things he is saying.

As the two get to know one another over time, the man can, instead of telling the woman what to do as through he already has her consent to do so, express a wish for her to whatever it is, saying something like, "I know I have no right to insist that you do this [say, get a taxi home instead of walking through an unsafe neighbourhood] but if or when you are mine, I would insist." Or he can say that if the two of them were in an established relationship, he would require X or not permit Y. If the two individuals are moving towards a relationship in which there will be an element of physical control, the man might sometimes say something like, "I know I do not have your consent yet, but when I do, I will take you in hand for this" or "If you were mine now I would physically stop you doing this." (What a man actually says in practice will depend on the two individuals and the unique relationship they are creating together. These are just possible examples. In some cas-

es the two individuals naturally engage physically from an early stage.)

And likewise, through the way she responds positively to the early subtle gestures on the man's part, and later, to the counterfactual statements the man makes (as in the paragraph above), a woman naturally shows her preference to be in a male-controlled relationship. If a man is too insensitive to pick up, through these subtle positive responses, a woman's desire for a Taken In Hand relationship, he is probably too insensitive for this kind of relationship.

The idea that to establish a Taken In Hand relationship it is necessary to act as though a Taken In Hand relationship is already established is balderdash. To create a real and lasting relationship, there are no shortcuts. You have to each begin from where you are, and gradually develop a relationship from there. A genuine relationship has no pre-written script to follow: it is unique to the two of you as individuals, and the more the way you interact arises out of the unique individuals you are, the more of a relationship you actually have.

Playing a role instead of behaving naturally may create the semblance of a relationship but it is no substitute for the real thing, and in some cases the faked intimacy and acted "relationship" actively inhibits, sabotages or prevents altogether the development of a genuine relationship.

So if you have been worried by pessimistic statements to the effect that if you don't act the part of a person already in a Taken In Hand

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relationship with the person you have only just met, the two of you will be unable to see one another as anything other than persons having a preference for a conventional egalitarian relationship, I hope that I have managed to set your mind at rest.¹⁷⁹

"THE POWER OF A WOMAN WHO SUBMITS TO HER MAN" (7 OCTOBER 2005)

I believe that when a woman chooses to submit in a relationship, she does not become less. In fact, she becomes an equal component in a two-part relationship whose total power or energy has been increased beyond the sum of its parts. She is an equal component in terms of the magnitude of her contribution, just not the direction.

The man might feel empowered in the Taken In Hand relationship; well, he is. But only as much as the woman allows him to be. The day she walks out, his positively charged alpha-energy is deflated. He's like a magnet with no iron to attract—so whatever power he might have had is irrelevant until he can find another pole with which to interact.

The woman's seemingly passive act of submission is, in a very Taoist sort of way, one of active creation. Simply put, she makes her man more powerful. His continued power depends on her continued submission. Personally, I regard someone with the ability to literally change me as being powerful.

Putting the relationship in this context, it only makes sense that a woman can and should be discrimi-

nating in how and when she exercises her power to create. The two organisms meet, notice they have opposite charges—thus there is attraction, so they make a conscious decision to tune their relationship. They position themselves in such a way as to maximize the total flow of energy.

It might serve some fantasy for some parties to think of the woman as some empty, mindless vessel, but the physical reality of the situation is that the woman remains responsible for her life. As such, of course she has the right to be cautious about with whom and in what manner she chooses to experience her relationships.¹⁸⁰

"HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN CONTROL IN LITTLE WAYS?" (13 OCTOBER 2005)

Women of a Taken In Hand bent often crave the feeling of being under their husband's active control. They want to feel that sense of deep peace and ecstasy that they get sometimes, more of the time. They want to be aware of their husband's authority and control often, not just sometimes.

That "thoroughly taken in hand" feeling, that blissfully "under his thumb" feeling, that "well-handled" feeling, that soft submissive feeling, that feeling of peacefulness and ecstasy, that feeling of floating on air, that feeling of being closely connected to him—it's powerful stuff!

But since there are many situations in which it is not possible or desirable to take drastic violent action, it is worth attuning yourself to the little things—the more subtle psychologi-

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cal forms of control. And if you are the husband in a Taken In Hand relationship, it is worth finding out what else, apart from a jolly good thrashing, brings your wife into that melted state you both love.

So, to female readers: What little things does or could your husband do or say to take you in hand or otherwise make you melt? And to male readers: what little things have had that effect, or might have that effect? What little things you have said or done have surprised you in having that effect? Let's make a list, for fun!

Of course these things are very individual so any list we create is going to include many ideas that would not work for most. However, I still think it would be interesting to create such a list, because people often can't think of anything that would work other than a violent thrashing, and if your in-laws are visiting or you are at a Buckingham Palace garden party or something, more subtlety and discretion might be called for. Besides, such a list could spark ideas that might suit the two of you as individuals.

When thinking about what little things do or might melt a Taken In Hand woman, consider your actual lives as the individuals and couple you are, and ask yourself where in your real, everyday life together could you (if you are the man) or your husband take a little more welcome control here and there. Think about what you are trying to achieve in life, both as individuals and jointly, and check that the ideas you come up with are at least consistent with those larger aims, if not actively leading in the directions you wish

your lives to go. The more your control is a real, useful part of your lives together, the less likely it is to start feeling like a bit of playacting. (Not that there is anything wrong with playacting if you enjoy that! It is just a different thing.)

If you enjoy gestures of control irrespective of whether it seems to have a purpose outside the control itself, there are lists of ideas all over the internet that you can use. But for many Taken In Hand readers many of these ideas would feel silly, pointless, disrespectful or humiliating so here, let's concentrate on listing ideas that are more directly connected with ordinary everyday life ("non-sexual" control than the control-for-control's-sake ideas or the "training" ideas ("erotic" control) one can find on other sites.¹⁸¹

"SAYING THINGS FOR EFFECT" (14 OCTOBER 2005)

Do you say things for effect, like the following statements?

"My wife is my slave, my property. I have the right to do anything I want with her, including killing her or commanding her to commit murder. No, I would not accept a limit on that power. I am the master."

"The first thing I do with my girls is to have them strip, then I grade each body part objectively on a scale of A to F. F is for "fail" but just remember that my subjective assessment could be very different from my objective assessment."

"I don't care! What, you think I care what you want?! I don't! I'm in

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charge; why should I care what you want?!”

A Taken In Hand person hearing one of these statements is likely to be slightly horrified, whereas a D/s or M/s person is more likely to understand instantly that such a statement is all part of the fun, and said for effect, to create drama, not least to thrill the woman.

This theatricality is just pretend, a bit of fun, acting, playing. It's not real. The man may say that he doesn't care what the woman wants but actually, he does care very much, and he is saying that very thing to *give her what she wants*. Similarly, it may thrill the M/s-inclined woman to suffer the humiliation of the slave inspection. And to some women, a man who dramatically pretends that his woman's life may be ended at his whim is the man for them.

Not so the Taken In Hand woman. One of the things Taken In Hand folk mean when they stress that the man's control is real as opposed to role-played or acted, is that the man is not *saying things for effect*. Or, on occasions when he does say things for effect, the Taken In Hand person would think of that as a play part of their relationship rather than the “real” bit.

When there is real control, a little goes a long way. It is so thrilling to those who like that sort of thing, that there is no need to say things for effect. Not only that, but for many Taken In Hand people, the playacting stuff is either distressing or extremely off-putting (if they do not realise that it is just pretend) or it has no power to thrill them (if they

do understand that it is just pretend). Those who want real control do not necessarily enjoy play-acted control. Some do, but many don't.

This is in no way to say that there is anything wrong with a bit of acted control, playing, and so on, I am merely drawing attention to the fact that, at least to your average Taken In Hand person, there is a difference between the two. The difference may not strike some as being valid, because the Taken In Hand woman is legally free to leave her husband at any time, so in a way, she has control of her own life. If you therefore think that the Taken In Hand control is no more real than the BDSM control—or that they are both real—then let us agree instead that if nothing else, there is a difference in matters of taste, here. The Taken In Hand person's taste is for control that is clearly respectful and caring and considerate, whereas the D/s or M/s person's taste might well be for control that is ostensibly uncaring, disrespectful, humiliating, and so on. The point is that whatever the difference actually is—whether a real vs. play difference or a difference in taste—there is a difference.

Taken In Hand men tend not to make statements for effect. They tend not to say that they don't care about the woman's wishes, because they do care, and their caring is an important and explicit part of the relationship. In D/s or M/s relationships, there is not necessarily any lack of love and caring, it is just not so apparent.

It is the Taken In Hand person's desire for the control to be/feel real and respectful that also makes some

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Taken In Hand folk completely uninterested in DD, discipline, and spanking. These things may feel real to many Taken In Hand individuals but they don't to everyone. To some, they feel plain silly. To others, all that stuff is a kinky game. And to some Taken In Hand folk, it all sounds appallingly disrespectful.

Taken In Hand folk tend to find all the "protocol" of the D/s and M/s communities, and the stylised "you've been bad; now you need to be punished" stuff of some parts of the DD/CP community, extremely tedious, silly, theatrical and entirely unappealing.* To many Taken In Hand persons these things feel artificial, and Taken In Hand folk want real.¹⁸²

"DO YOU HAVE THE PATIENCE TO MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE WORK?" (14 OCTOBER 2005)

For the past several decades, I have referred to the period of adjustment through which men and women go during a period of establishing an intimate relationship as knocking off the rough edges.

If you know anything about wooden gears—often found in old mills and factories of bygone era—you are aware that older wooden gears generally mesh together better as the teeth age than when they

were new. Wooden gears are unique in that regard.

The analogy of wooden gears more closely approximates the adjustment needed for men and women than, for example, metal gears—as in an old-fashioned standard automobile transmission—which wear out the more they rub against each other.

I asked my wife why she thought we had managed to stay together for so long. Her reply was that we were patient with each other. That is probably as good an answer as you will find in explaining longevity.

Couples often come together like metal gears—each wanting his or her way. The longer they remain in that mindset, grinding against each other, the less chance there is for the necessary *we* to develop.

From their various perspectives, people from different educational backgrounds or different schools of thought often argue like ships blowing their horns as they pass in the night. While this is not always catastrophic in outcomes, it can be absolutely deadly for an interpersonal relationship with regard to matters that affect the relationship.

One thing that can be difficult for some couple is a wife having considerably more formal education than her husband. One of my favorites is a Ph.D. in economics married to a truck driver.

Another thing that is quite deadly to relationships is the interjection of legal parlance as an authority of interpersonal disputes. As an adversarial system, the law is designed to determine winners and losers. There is no *we* in the legal system.

* Or, if you want to quibble about this distinction, let us agree that Taken In Hand folk have different taste and preferences in terms of control. The point is that there is an identifiable difference, whatever you want to call that difference.

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Law consists of a peculiar form of logic—often at odds with common understanding—deciding who is right and who is wrong. An example of the inane is a legal definition of insanity that is quaint at best.

Further more, legal remedies are enforced. Arbitration, mediation, and negotiation—which, on an informal level, are necessary in marriage—are *alternatives* to the legal process. Yet, numerous individuals in marriages insist on presenting their points of view as if they were lawyers trying to persuade a jury.

Even worse, there are those who insist on *firing* their partner when they come to loggerheads.

Marriage has its own logic. At one time, the implications of that unique logic were recognized. Today, they are less understood—even ignored.

The unique logic of marriage explains why a rift can develop in the relationship that may be settled quite satisfactorily with yelling, spanking, and lovemaking—in that order and within a relatively short span of time without airing the couple's dirty linen in public. In no other human interaction does that combination of events make sense. In fact, beyond the context of family, the sequence is unworkable.

As my wife indicated, patience is the key. Absent a willingness to give more than one gets dooms many marriages.

Patience should be among the first lessons teenagers learn from their first loves. First boyfriends and girlfriends are often narcissistic creatures. The relationship is often about them rather than the other person.

In time, some people get beyond an all-consuming *me* attitude. Others do not. Those who do, make good mates. The rest are doomed to failed relationships that are akin to the common sense definition of insanity—doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting a different outcome.

Since few people see things exactly alike, a curious question emerges: If we ever found that perfect specimen of our dreams, would he or she really want us? The truth is probably not. Marriage make in heaven are usually the result of a lot of work on earth.¹⁸³

“SI VIS PACEM, PARA BELLUM” (16 OCTOBER 2005)

Si vis pacem, para bellum (which means: *if you want peace, prepare for war*) is good advice for any man aspiring to take his woman in hand. Not because she is unwilling—for if she is, then he should not do it—but because this Roman maxim expresses an insight about human psychology that he might need in this Taken In Hand adventure.

What does *si vis pacem, para bellum* mean in this context? It doesn't mean get ready to do battle, or you'll have a fight on your hands, like in many conventional relationships. It is nothing to do with anything unpleasant, like fighting and bad feeling. It is about fun and adventure and excitement. It means that a man needs to be able to *handle* his wife. It means that in the event of any resistance he would be willing and able to act decisively, firmly and

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thoroughly. Rather than going into his cave, or having a tantrum, he would *take action*. He would *take her in hand* and *set her straight*.

Note that I say *would*. The counterfactual form was deliberate. *Si vis pacem, para bellum* means that by being prepared to be firm, to take her in hand, to *take action*, he makes it much less likely that he will encounter resistance or rebellion in the first place.

In an intimate relationship, what many a Taken In Hand woman wants is to feel certain that whatever happens, her husband is not in any danger of being overpowered by her. She doesn't want to have to tiptoe around all the time lest she inadvertently crush him. She wants to be able to be fully herself instead of having to tone herself down all the time, and she wants to know without any doubt that her husband can *handle* her, even the full her in all her power. She needs to know this, otherwise she cannot relax, and never feels peaceful.

Being able to handle her implies being prepared to take action in the event that the woman gets out of hand. Whining and complaining will not cut it. Nor will rage or spiteful comments calling into question her femininity, her womanhood, or (if she regards herself as submissive) her submissiveness. Such responses seem weak and passive. She needs to feel that her man is active and strong – stronger than she.

The action necessary depends on the individual woman, the individual man, and how they interact with each other. For some, the physical manifestation of the man's power is

important; for others, it is the psychological aspect that is more important.

But the idea that the woman will necessarily be constantly fighting and resisting her husband's control for ever even though she wants a Taken In Hand relationship with him is, as I have argued before, untenable. The knowledge that her husband can and will take firm and thorough action to enforce his will releases the Taken In Hand woman from the need to resist. She can relax. She feels safe. She is no longer consumed with the fear that she might overpower him. She doesn't need to keep fighting for ever and ever until death do them part. The tamed shrew is at peace – but only when she has been tamed. Recall Kate's monologue in *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Some men have a commanding presence without even trying. Like my favourite teacher at school, some never actually have to take any action, because they naturally command obedience. But in most cases, the woman might need some kind of *evidence* that he is strong enough not to let her walk all over him. *Words* are not always enough. *Actions* speak louder than words. Weak words begging and nagging the woman to be more submissive or obedient are unlikely ever to be enough.

The man who calmly takes his woman's resistance in his stride and takes firm and decisive action is the kind of man who can provoke in even the strongest, most alpha woman worshipful adoration and a wholehearted desire to submit. He is

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the man who truly knows peace. *Si vis pacem, para bellum.*¹⁸⁴

"MY FULL AND COMPLETE SURRENDER" (17 OCTOBER 2005)

I'm not in a relationship right now, but years ago when I was in my early twenties, I was involved with a man who was very good at taking me in hand in little ways. I'm not a submissive woman, but with this man I found myself wanting to be submissive, almost as if I was compelled in some way to be submissive to him. He was always very gentle with me; he never raised his voice to me in anger, but he could be very stern at times.

He could settle me down with just a look or a few quietly spoken words. Most men I would have challenged, but whenever he gave me that look and his tone took on that firm, quiet authority, I always submitted to him. So odd, because it's so totally out of character for me to submit—ever! I think that is why I fell in love with him: finally, a man that I couldn't run roughshod right over. He and I never discussed the dynamics of our relationship. I had never heard of Taken in Hand, or DD, or any of those labels. It just seemed natural for him to lead and for me to follow. Although he did spank me a time or two...it wasn't a common occurrence, mainly because it wasn't necessary: the "look" and that stern tone of voice worked so well on me for him.

I'm one of those women who could be called a tester. It's not really a conscious thing, it just seems to be in

my nature to test and see how far a man will let me push him. When I was a young woman, I didn't realize that I did it, but now, I recognize the behavior for what it is. It's my way of separating the men from the boys, so to speak. One thing that I've noticed is that when I exhibit this behavior with a man, if he reacts in a firm manner with me, I stop the behavior immediately. That's not to say that I won't ever test him again, but I won't test him as often as I would the average guy.

This particular ex-boyfriend had my number and he knew exactly how to handle me. I was so aware of him as a man and of me as a woman when we were together. I've never felt as feminine as I did when I was with him. The way he looked at me, the way he touched me, his strength, his protectiveness—everything about him made me melt like warm butter. I wanted to crawl inside him; I couldn't get close enough. That's what it feels like to me—to be taken in hand... so thoroughly taken in hand.

As I said, he didn't spank me often, but I did notice that he patted my bottom a lot, and for some reason that made me feel submissive to him. I'm not sure why, but it did. I think maybe it's because I knew instinctively that those pats could become spanks if I wasn't careful. LOL! There were so many little things that he did that made me aware of his control, and thus made me feel submissive to him. This may sound odd to some, but even the way that he would pick me up and so gently lay me down on the bed when he was going to make love with me

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made me feel so feminine and submissive. The feel of his powerful body on top of mine, and that pure male look of possession in his eyes when he took me left me in no doubt that I belonged to him. I gave to him what I've never been able to give any man before or since—my full and complete surrender. I hope that one day, I'll experience that wonderful feeling again with a special man. :)¹⁸⁵

"FLYING BY THE SEAT OF YOUR PANTS" (19 OCTOBER 2005)

Being in love is like living on or beside a great ocean. The sea has a logic that is all its own. Even when reduced to science, the physics of the sea is not that of the air.

For example, the deeper one goes in the ocean, the greater pressure and the less likely one is likely to return to sea level—alive or otherwise. Conversely, absent an ability to break the force of gravity, the higher one goes aloft, the more unstable conventional aerodynamics and power plants become and the greater the chances of planting one's self in terra firma at the end of a terminal return!

Love is more visceral than cerebral. It is more physical and spiritual than intellectual. In a word, love is primordial. Although often fragile, it is eternal. It is at once a contradiction, a paradox, and a solid foundation. In many ways, love is beyond the ability of language to describe—both in its depth of pain and its exaltation of delight.

My wife and I are very much in love. Yet, there have been times when our marriage could have crumbled like a walnut smashed with a hammer.

Almost everyone who meets my wife thinks she is the sweetest person on the face of the earth. Then, as my wife once frankly explained to her mother, underneath a superficial charm once lurked a real bitch that only could be tamed by a man unafraid to leave bruises on her buttocks!

My wife had first realized her need as a preteen. Of all the boys she knew, she thought I might be the one best able to handle her. Then, I disappeared into the abyss of military service and she totally lost track of my whereabouts. Consequently, although I was her first love, I was by no means her first date.

When I reappeared, she engineered our first date—even pushing her curfew by several hours just to be with me. In time, she put me to the test as she had done the other men she dated. In doing so, she discovered someone able to handle her. The rest, as they say, is history.

Although there were hints from various sources, there was no book to tell me how to handle my future wife. With the singular and profound exception of a women explicitly recommending wives be spanked, it was largely on the job training.

Where I made my initial mistake—corrected after taking the woman's advice—was in my failure to understand that women need periodic spankings rather than just one to prove it could be done. Once we got

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that settled—after we were married—our relationship improved dramatically.

There are no how-to books on marriage in the same way that there are texts on kitchen renovation or bathroom plumbing. Difficulties in human interaction are not always as easy to solve as dislodging a hairball from the bathroom lavatory trap or creating more kitchen counter space.

Neat and clean remedies do not often exist in the bedroom. Measurements in marriage are less precise. Remedies do not always come with instant results. Things are more complex.

Thus, as noted above, love is more visceral than cerebral. It is more flying by the seat of one's pants than filing a flight plan. Sometimes, it is even VFR (looking for visual references beyond the cockpit) in IFR (flying only by instruments) conditions with half the instrument panel red tagged.

Getting married is often like jumping from the high board without being sure of the water depth below. It is like stepping off the mythological cliff wearing wings that Zeus claims will keep one from plunging to the rocks beneath. Flying is sometimes the greater surprise.¹⁸⁶

"WHAT IS THE ALPHA MALE'S SECRET?" (21 OCTOBER 2005)

Much of the communication in interpersonal relationships is non-verbal. In addition to body language, facial expressions, or gestures, there is a particular primal resonance in the voice that allows

even soft-spoken individuals to maintain an air of authority. Presence or absence of this voice quality often determines social standing.

The resonance explains why some husbands can use *that certain tone of voice* and accomplish things through verbalization that other men cannot even though they raise the decibel level. At the same time, to use an appropriate American sports metaphor, an absence of the requisite resonance can explain why some men sit on the proverbial bench and seldom get a chance to put it through the uprights.

Where alpha males differ from their counterparts is in an ability to maintain the same phonation regardless of circumstances. The lack of excitability comes from an inner strength. This attribute has a calming effect and inspires confidence. These are men with whom women want to mate and propagate. They are the alpha males.¹⁸⁷

"THE NOW HABIT" (23 OCTOBER 2005)

What does a book on procrastination have to do with "taken in hand" relationships? I read Neil Fiore's book *The NOW Habit* this weekend, and in the process, had an "AH HA!" moment. I'm not a procrastinator (honest, the book was only on my reading list for two weeks), but I chose to read the book because there are some things I just can't seem to get around to, and I was hoping for some insight.

Neil Fiore describes two different methods of motivation, the "push

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method" and the "pull method". In using the "push method", a person feels compelled to perform a task because they "HAVE" to, leading to a natural resistance and feeling of being punished. Using the "pull method" a person is drawn into performing the task because they "WANT" to, creating positive momentum and in a sense making the project easier or more enjoyable.

So many times on this site, a poster comments about a relationship where they were drawn into a "taken in hand" relationship without even really realizing it. There are also a number of comments and questions by people wondering why, if a "taken in hand" relationship is something they (and often, their spouse) want, do they feel so much resistance to its application. Others ask how they can get their significant other to accept a relationship on "taken in hand" terms.

I believe dissection of "taken in hand" relationships would reveal the most successful ones employ the "pull method" much more than the "push method". This may hold true for relationships on any other terms as well. We all know it's better to pull something heavy than it is to push it (think of front-wheel drive vs. rear-wheel drive). If you're feeling bogged down in your attempts to create a "taken in hand" relationship, perhaps a change from pushing to pulling will make a difference for you.¹⁸⁸

True love doesn't see size, color or even age. I define "age" as a couple who are both consenting adults.

I understand the physical issues and how they can become obstacles for some couples. Being overweight does pose issues with breathing which is something we all have to be able to do to function in life. If one is struggling for breath than how in the world can you enjoy sex?

My husband is a man who is overweight but he is well proportioned and I find him incredibly sexy. He has the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen and they can pierce right through me. The looks he has given me at times will stop me in my tracks.

There are other things that I find sexy about him in his physical features and he is quite handsome. In fact, I love to tell him how handsome he is. I deeply love his personality. He is amazing to me, with how he conducts himself in private and at work. His integrity, maturity, strength, tenderness, kindness, sense of humor and authority speak volumes of who he is.

I love how he makes love to me; he can be gentle and strong at the same time. The weight issue is something that we have worked with in order to maintain a satisfying sex life for both of us. As he says "Things can be workable if you are willing to work it out." I realize that there are people who are not attracted to those who are heavier and that is understandable. Everyone has the right to their own opinion to what they find desirable in a spouse.

For us we love each other unconditionally and it is easy to do because

**"WHEN LOVE TRANSCENDS A WEIGHT
ISSUE" (27 OCTOBER 2005)**

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of how much we value one another. We just do.

When we were first married and he was slimmer we were still learning about sex and positions, etc. It was good but not as wonderful as it is now. So being thin or heavy doesn't matter to me. I have experienced it both ways. I prefer my husband as he is now because he has the maturity of how to handle me and he knows what I like and I know what he likes. We enjoy pleasing each other.

Will he ever lose the weight? I believe that he will because he has a desire to be healthy so we can spend more years together. Recently he told me that he realizes that it was his way of thinking that has sabotaged his efforts to lose weight through the years; and now he believes that he is going to be successful at achieving his goal. I am supporting him in his efforts.

I will say this however: that I love him as he is and I don't just love him but I am in love with him. He is my desire, my best friend and the lover of my life. The man with whom I have had four children. And the man and only person in this world who can handle me.¹⁸⁹

"A BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO SPANKING" (28 OCTOBER 2005)

Many or possibly even most Taken In Hand relationships do not involve any kind of physical control or spanking, but some do. A reader desirous of spanking asked *how long and how hard should a spanking be?* The answer to the reader's question,

how long and how hard should she be spanked when being taken in hand physically by her husband?, is that it is not a matter of how long or how hard, and thinking about it that way is likely in some cases to be problematic.

What the man should have in mind, especially if he and his wife are beginners in terms of spanking, is not a certain number of blows or a certain number of minutes of spanking at a certain impact (we're not working on a car here, chaps—your wife is a more complex entity!) but how what he is doing, in this situation, is affecting this particular individual woman at this very moment.

Someone who has never been spanked before or who is of a sensitive disposition, or whose hormones are getting the better of her, or who is upset, or who hates to displease her husband, might be in floods of tears and really have had enough after only three whacks. Someone who has been spanked nightly for three decades might well be fine with an hour of hard spanking.

The man needs to be less concerned with textbook numbers and more concerned with the state of mind of his wife. He also needs to be concerned with the physical effects, but the most important aspect is the psychological. Is she still defiant? Has he been sufficiently thorough? Is she now crying freely and clinging to him? Does it seem as though she can't take any more?

Does she seem not to have been much affected yet? Does that seem likely given what he has done, or could it be that something has gone wrong, and that she is unable to

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show how it is affecting her? If he asks her to rate honestly what he has done so far on a range of 1 to 10 where 10 would be on the unbearable end (the "enough!" end), and 1 would be barely feeling it, how does she respond? What do her eyes say? Has something gone wrong? Is she panic-stricken and distressed? Is she still connected or is she strangely emotionally dissociated, disconnected, paralysed, blank-faced?

The answer to the question *how long and how hard?* is that there is no one-size-fits-all answer. There is no recipe that will be good with all women or in all circumstances. Not only are all women different in terms of what they can take, what an individual woman can take varies not just over time and with experience, but depending on a large number of factors too numerous to cover exhaustively here. For example:

What was her antecedent state of mind or emotional state?

If, just before he started, she was in a good state of mind, then, other things being equal (which they never are!) she might well be able to take more than if she was in a highly emotional state before he even started.

What was it that led to the spanking, and how does she feel about that?

The woman's view of the situation can have all manner of effects. If, for example, she thinks the spanking completely unjust, then it could be that she would be able to take—and indeed need—either a lot more, or a

lot less. If the spanking is just a bit of fun, she is much more likely to be able to take more than if it is deadly serious. If the man is spanking her because he has had a bad day at work and needs to take it out on her, if she is happy to be used that way, in general she will be able to take more than she would be able to take if it were about her. But if she is not happy to be used that way, then obviously the reverse might be the case.

How attuned is the man to the woman?

Is the man good at gauging the woman's responses? Is he very insightful psychologically, at least when it comes to this particular woman? Can he often tell what she is feeling, sometimes before she is consciously aware of it herself? Or is he relatively insensitive? If he is relatively attuned to the woman's responses, far more will be possible than if he is not, because if he is not, that increases the risk of something going wrong, and may be scary for the woman, and that means that he has to be more cautious and may not be able to spank her as much as if that were not the case. Such a man should take care to talk to the woman (including when they are just having a general cosy chat and all is fine, not just in the middle of a jolly good thrashing) to make sure that he is on the right track.

What is the man's state of mind when spanking the woman?

If he is furious, she might be able to take a lot less—or sometimes a lot more, depending upon how his furi-

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ousness affects her—than if he is, say, calm and lovingly-connected with her. Is he genuinely and reasonably disappointed in her? Then she is likely to be able to take a lot less.

What is the man saying to her as he spansks her?

Is he gently telling her that he is spanking her to reconnect with her and to get this issue out of the way, because he loves her and he is not going to allow their connection to be broken? Is he lecturing her kindly and lovingly? Is he lecturing her angrily? Is he scaring her? Is he soothing her? Is he coldly furious but saying nothing? What he says can dramatically affect how much is needed and how much she can take.

How much history do the two of them have together?

Have they been married for decades? Are they just starting to get to know each other? Have they been together forever but are only just starting to introduce spanking?

Is the woman often spanked?

This can make a difference, one way or the other, depending on many other factors.

What kind of person is the woman?

Is she the sort of person who is calm and not easily panicked? Then she will be able to take more than the kind of woman who is more emotionally labile or likely to panic. Is she the kind of person who thinks that spanking is pussy stuff? Then the man may need to use a whip or a cane or some other implement, and/or he may need to get a lot more creative psychologically. Is she

the kind of person who has a high degree of mental control over how much pain she perceives? Then again, she will be able to take a lot more, and the man will need to use a lot more psychology and creativity in his approach.

What is the woman's pain threshold?

Some women just naturally have a very high pain threshold, while others have a naturally low pain threshold. With a woman with a very high pain threshold, the man is going to have to be a lot more creative psychologically, because the woman may be able to take more psychologically than her body can.

Where on her body is the woman being spanked?

Her bottom can usually take more than any other part of her anatomy.

Is the woman a strictly bottom-only person? Is the man?

If the idea of spanking anywhere other than on the woman's bottom is completely unacceptable to one or other of the persons, that will affect what is possible and desirable.

How experienced are each of them in terms of spanking?

Not only do people learn with experience, a woman who has been spanked a lot in the past can often physically take much more than she could when she was first spanked. The inexperienced woman can be spanked black and blue with just a few spansks, whereas the woman who has been being spanked for years tends not to bruise anything

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like as much. The experienced woman is also less likely to panic, and thus may well be able to take more.

Does the man know what he is doing?

If the man is well-versed in what is safe, more is likely to be possible than if the man knows nothing about safety and has no clue what he is doing. If the man does not know, for example, that it is absolutely essential to avoid hitting the coccyx, the kidneys, and so on, the woman might well want him to seek advice from a competent person such as an open-minded doctor friend before he starts spanking her. Note that there is a lot of medically unsound and very bad advice about safety on BDSM sites, so it really is better to check the facts with a doctor if at all possible.

What implement is being used?

Different individuals can take more or less with different implements or hand spanking. Some can take a lot of hand spanking but little caning or whipping. Some can take a lot of caning but little spanking or paddling. The different things feel different (some talk in terms of bark versus bite, others in terms of thud versus sting, some go into the mathematics of momentum, wind resistance, surface area, impact, etc.), and different women prefer or can take more of one kind than another.

What is the woman's current physical condition?

If she has recently been beaten black and blue, or if her skin has been damaged by a previous beating, or if her skin is fragile or if she

is currently very sensitive physically for some reason (perhaps because of the time of the month), the man will not be able to do as much as if that were not the case. He might have to spank a different area, if that is an acceptable idea in their relationship. He will need to be more creative and use more psychology and rely less on the physical.

Is the woman in danger of getting "leatherbottom", and is that a problem for her?

Skin that has been repeatedly spanked can become tough and leathery. This can be fine for some, but for others, it is really very unpleasant, and to be avoided at all costs.

What is the temperature of the air?

This can make a difference to what can be tolerated.

How fit is the woman?

This can make a difference, too. If, for example, a thin cane is being used on a very voluptuous woman on a flabby area of her body, the slack flesh might fold around the cane too much, stretch and tear, so the man would have to be more careful, use less force, and quite probably use a thicker implement or his hand instead.

Where is the spanking happening, and is privacy an issue?

If, for example, the woman fears that the children will hear, she will be able to take less than if she feels completely safe in terms of privacy. If the spanking is happening in the privacy of their own cellar with no chance of being disturbed or over-

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heard, more will be possible than otherwise—unless of course the woman is the sort of person who likes being spanked in public.

Is the man she is with the right man for her?

With the wrong man, she may just find the whole idea of being spanked unbearable, or she might feel completely indifferent to it, or she might be unable to express any emotion even when she feels extremely distressed, or she might even dissociate from the pain. The connection between the two may be not right, or it may be non-existent. If she has not been spanked before, she might well conclude that it is definitely not her cup of tea. (This could also happen with the right man under the wrong circumstances!)

A warning about abuse

Is the man connecting with the woman through the spanking, or is he disconnected and simply taking it out on her abusively?

If the man is angry and taking it out on the woman, and not with any intention of reconnecting or getting the issue dealt with, that would be a very, very bad thing. That is the stuff of abuse. Whilst something bad might happen once in a blue moon, if there is a pattern of disconnected, abusive spanking, that should be a big red flag, putting it mildly. If spanking does not reconnect you, **do not do it**—or find a way to do it that *does* reconnect you. Sometimes, at the beginning, it can take a bit of time and trial and error to find out what works for the two individuals

as a couple. If the man is anxious to find a way to do it that *is* connecting and constructive, then having patience can be fine, but if he seems not to care how the woman feels, and does not seem open to the idea of making changes in what he is doing, the alarm bells should be deafening. If your man is abusing you, **leave him and get help, before it's too late.**

Spanking without sound

Hand spanking is terribly loud and not ideal if privacy is an issue. Implements that are quiet are the thin ones like a birch, a switch, a cane or a buggy whip. If the sound issue is the woman's screams, a gag might help, but note that this means the man will have less information about how what he is doing is affecting the woman, and in some cases, this could be a problem.

A note about bruising

When a woman has never been spanked before, it is very common for there to be very alarming-looking bruises after a good thrashing, so don't worry if this happens to you. But if you are someone who seems to bruise much more easily than other people, do mention it to your doctor, because this can occasionally indicate a medical condition that needs attention.

Spanking without leaving marks

If the woman has been spanked often, spanking may not leave bruises. But if she has not, it may well do. If you want the spanking not to leave any bruises, and the woman has not been spanked much before, then you

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will want to start softly and experiment. You might want to try a leather paddle, a wet towel, a broad leather strap, a multi-tail whip (known to Americans as a "flogger") with multiple strip (not square) tails of suede, or perhaps a bushy or rod birch, instead of hand spanking.

A single switch can, like other thin implements, do some minor damage (or even kill, if it ruptures a kidney), but the rod birch (a bundle of light switches (saplings) tied together with string or strong tape) makes a series of lighter impacts over a wider area, and is unlikely to cause serious injury. A bushy birch (a bundle of light twigs tied together with string or strong tape) makes far more impacts in number, over a far wider area, but because each impact is much lighter, it is much less likely to bruise or cause any other significant injury (though it may well leave tiny cuts). If you want not to leave cuts, doing it on clothed skin can help. Be sure you know what you are doing before making your own birch. For example, you need to know that you should never use evergreen twigs—fir, spruce, yew, etc.—as they are dangerous because of the toxins they contain. A birch is more of a seasonal implement, requiring more young, green, sap-filled twigs or saplings as opposed to old, dry ones, and it needs to be used fresh.

Spanking safely

Hand spanking on the lower bottom (avoid the coccyx) is undoubtedly the safest thing. Using implements can be dangerous, and don't even think of using a bullwhip if you don't know what you are doing:

it can easily injure and kill. And spanking other parts of a woman's body can also be dangerous and care needs to be taken. For example, spanking between the legs can in some cases cause urinary tract infections. It is best to err on the side of caution and start slowly, softly, safely and gently, checking that there is no problem, gradually doing more as you get to know what the individual woman can take.

If you are a woman wanting to be thoroughly taken in hand, do not expect to get the thrashing of your life if it is the first time your man ever spans you. Be patient as your man explores and experiments with you. His caution is well-advised. Give it time. Talk to him if he really has no idea what is needed, but do not push him or criticise him. He needs to be in control and you presumably do not want to put him off by making it feel onerous to him.

Spanking thoroughly

Some men over-estimate what a woman can take; more men underestimate what is needed. What is needed depends so much on the individual woman that it is a good idea to talk about this if possible. Some women prefer lighter, less injurious spankings often, but many seem to crave a really thorough spanking less often but on a regular basis. The man needs to know which kind of woman his wife is.

Many women complain that their husbands are not thorough enough. They actually want the man to continue way beyond what the man thinks is enough. They want him to continue even when they are screaming for him to stop and seem

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to be thinking that he is a monster. They want him to continue through that, and even to keep going after she has given up the fight. They feel somehow cheated when the man stops the moment she has given up the fight, or the moment she starts crying, or the moment she seems peaceful. They want more, even when they don't seem to need any more. (Think of another intimate situation in which a woman often has to tell an inexperienced man to keep going and not to stop what he is doing. It is like that only more so, whether she is saying "Don't stop! Don't stop!" or not.)

Many women can take (and ultimately want) much more than they think they can at the time. And if they don't get it, they feel frustrated later. They may well be panicking and thinking that their man is a monster, and yet nevertheless, they will be annoyed and frustrated later if he gives up at that point. In many cases, the man needs to get her beyond that. He needs to win. And if he does not, she will feel cheated. This is by far the most common complaint I hear: men are not even remotely thorough enough. They do it much too lightly, and they stop much, much, much too soon.

The trouble is that to be as thorough as is really necessary in many cases, the man really needs to be very creative, because many women need more than their bodies can take. And the more a woman feels a lack of thoroughness, the more often things tend to happen that lead to a thrashing, and pretty soon she is black and blue and suffering skin lesions and in no physical state to

receive any more thrashings for a week or more, leaving her thoroughly frustrated.

In these cases, it is often difficult for the woman to tell the man that he is not being thorough enough, because she does not want to criticise his efforts, so it is a good idea for him to ask her to rate the spanking on a scale of 1 to 10 as I mentioned above, and to watch her eyes and body language as she answers. If she seems to be being evasive, or if her eyes and body language belie her answer, take that into account next time.

Fear

Some women do not feel controlled unless they fear being spanked, and they can't fear it unless they have had at least one really very thorough one. And many report that one is not enough. They need a super-thorough one every now and then or they forget, or start to fear that the man is not in control any more.

On the other hand, many women would hate or even be destroyed by fear. Some women enjoy the thrill of fear, but others can't experience a thrill in association with fear under any circumstances, only distress. Do be sure that you know which kind of woman your wife is!

Active, bodily spanking, or ordering her to present her bottom

Some women want to be *brought to submission, brought into subjection, tamed and overpowered* and controlled physically *actively* and *bodily* by a man. Being quietly told to present her bottom to the man might

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not work. She might not comply. Some women might actually be more taken in hand if the man were to use plain bodily force to impose his will, rather than spanking, caning, etc. Other women like the more quiet, less physically forceful and overpowering control. And some women like one thing at one time and another at another time. Some men like to bring the woman under control using overpowering bodily force and possibly active, forceful spanking, then, once they have thoroughly subdued the woman, they move on whipping or caning or other punishment that requires the woman's cooperation.

Spontaneous or staged?

Edward Anthony, author of *Thy Rod and Staff*, has been kind enough to suggest this addition to this guide. As he indicates, some like formal, staged, ritualistic spanking but many Taken In Hand folk prefer the spanking to be more spontaneous and "natural" in style, and less staged and ritualistic. Elaborate staging can, for some, make it seem more like a CP role-playing game, and taking a woman in hand by spanking her is not that. Some like variety.

Passionate, "uncontrolled" spanking

Some women want and welcome passionate, high-energy spanking when their man is angry, and they long for such spontaneous, "uncontrolled", more emotionally-intense spanking that happens at those times. They find that more connecting than the carefully-controlled, measured, less emotionally-intense

spanking that happens when the man is very calm and controlled. On the other hand, some women would find it terrifying if their husband were to spank them when he was angry, and in such cases, obviously, take care not to do that. But in many cases, if you are a man who is always very calm and in control, and one day you spank in anger, it is quite possible that that will turn out not to have been such a bad thing as you might have thought it would be. A man's calmness and control often makes a woman feel safe and protected; but in some relationships, spanking her in anger can be intensely emotionally connecting and cathartic for both.

To take or not to take?

Some want to be *taken* or "raped" immediately after having been taken in hand, as part of the taking in hand process. For these women, being taken by the man is the ultimate expression of his control, and this makes the spanking feel more thorough than if he did not do that. For other women, being taken afterwards is more about connecting and making love, and it makes them feel safe and loved. For some women, being spanked and not taken afterwards would be a cruel and destructive punishment that could spell trouble for the relationship. Others feel very differently, and would not want to be taken. If in doubt, find a way to check that what you are doing is not destructive.

She needs to feel safe with him in order to surrender

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Stephen has pointed out that spanking is not effective unless the woman reaches a state of complete surrender, and that she can only reach that state if she feels connected to her man. She has to feel safe with him. She has to feel that this is *her* man and that she really trusts him. She cannot open up if he has not captured her heart. In order to capture her heart, he must not just care about her but show her that he really cares. As Stephen puts it: "If the husband has not taken the time and the effort to demonstrate his loving concern for her then no amount of spanking will reach her mind or her heart. He *must* demonstrate to her that he is worthy of such a precious thing as her surrender. It really is a tender moment between a man and his wife. If he is patient and kind and generous as well as firm and strong and determined she be his, it is then, and only then, that he can truly call her his own."

Spanking to heal

Spanking your Taken In Hand wife has the power to heal her. If she is inappropriately anxious or panicking, it can soothe her and calm her down. If she is temporarily unbalanced psychologically, it can bring her back into a state of balanced equilibrium. If she is angry, it can diffuse her anger. If she is hurt or feeling insecure, it can make her feel better. But it can only do these things if both of you attach to the spanking that meaning, and to attach that meaning to the spanking, you may well need to express what you are trying to do quite directly.

For example, suppose your Taken In Hand wife is feeling neglected and makes an unfortunate comment to the effect that she is obviously your lowest priority. You feel a little annoyed and upset that she has said that, and you decide to give her a good hiding. This is quite probably a very good idea. It can get all your annoyance out of your system, for one thing. But it can do so much more, if you are aware of the possibility and use the opportunity.

When you spank your wife, talk to her. If you feel annoyed, tell her about that. But when you have stopped feeling annoyed, talk to her more positively. Tell her that you love her and care about her, and that you are spanking her because it will soothe her and make her see that you are in control and connecting with her. Tell her that you will spank her as often and as thoroughly as is necessary to show her that you are there for her and that she is in fact your highest priority (or whatever is in doubt in the particular case). Speak with loving kindness in your voice, but be firm. Be sure to be thorough enough. And keep talking.

When you spank your wife in this spirit, what you are doing is to reassure her that you are in control and that you love her and are there for her. You are giving her what she needs. If you talk soothingly but firmly to her while you do it, it can calm fears and anger and bring her from a state of "hormonal" craziness to a state of deep peacefulness and serenity.

It may well be possible to help someone with more severe or chron-

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ic problems too—I have certainly heard of such cases—like alcoholism and other addictions, severe jealousy, low self-esteem, borderline personality disorder, and so on, but obviously it would be unwise to enter a relationship with such a person on the assumption that spanking could solve anything. Those with serious problems should seek professional help. But if you are already in a relationship and are not ready to give up on it, taking your wife in hand can help in some cases.

Teething troubles and other minor mishaps

When a man starts taking his wife in hand using spanking, things do not always go smoothly. In some cases it takes time for the two individuals to find out what works for them. Many men take a lot of time to grow into the idea and practice of taking a woman in hand by spanking her. They have had it drummed into them that women are not to be hit. Don't give up if it all seems not to be going according to plan at first. Give it time. Just be sure to make changes if what you are doing is not working.

Stephen has pointed out that in some cases even when a couple is experienced there can be occasional mishaps when a spanking doesn't work.

When things go wrong

Both men and women need to be aware that it is unwise to rely on the fact that a woman is not screaming or crying as a guide to whether or not everything is all right. Some women, and indeed many women in

some circumstances or with the wrong man, are unable to cry or express any emotion even when they are in extreme pain and distress. They become “paralysed”. It is as though they are being operated on using curare (which paralyses them but does not make them feel any less pain) instead of an effective anaesthetic. In their minds they are screaming in agony, but they cannot express it.

Another problem is dissociation. In some cases, if something bad is happening, a woman automatically dissociates from it. This is her mind's way of protecting itself from unlimited distress and pain. If either dissociation or “paralysis” is happening, it will seem as though the woman can take more, when in fact, the best thing to do would be to stop immediately and hold her and soothe her and love her and support her psychologically.

Men need to be aware of the risk of these things happening, and guard against them. Spanking should be connecting and constructive. If the woman is dissociating or paralysed, it is not connecting, it is destructive, harmful, and potentially abusive. Be careful. If your wife never cries, she might be fine, like Louise and others who never cry—or she might be anything but fine. She might be in the same state of mind as a battered wife. When in doubt, talk to her and check that what you are doing is not causing harmful “paralysis” or dissociation.

If anything goes seriously wrong physically, you *must* call the emergency number of your country. If you are not willing to call for an

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ambulance in the case of an emergency, don't even think about doing anything that might involve such risk.¹⁹⁰

"FEAR OF DOMINATION" (29 OCTOBER 2005)

I just want to say after seeing this I joined immediately. Finally, a site where women can be women and men can be men and there are no apologies for it. And there appears a conspicuous absence of a therapist talking us out of some newly phrased disorder. This is so refreshing. The discovery is good timing for me.

I choose freely now, but not before being brought to my knees in desperate forgiveness. I have been Taken in Hand by default, all because I didn't allow it in the first place!

Taken in Hand has been a thing which has struggled in slow evolution for 8 years between my boyfriend (Josh) and me. Male dominance has always frightened me, and it was best I thought to not allow a thing to get started that I might regret. Mine is quiet, strong, serious, commanding, consistent, and is sure about what he wants. The potential for physicality is quite there. In fear I would use the law to diminish the force of his say only to painfully learn again and again that he was right. I've put him, and me, through hell before finally seeing the light.

I used domestic violence laws frivolously as a means of safeguarding my autonomy for years with him. Don't get me wrong... I love him

deeply but I had never allowed him that one step over me. There was no opportunity for him to use discipline, to raise his voice on me, or to ply me with commands. But in hindsight I wished he could. I prevented him from having his way even while knowing he was right! I prevented it and acted contrary even if it was a mistake. I couldn't let go of my self, even while he was melting me by degrees. I loved him deeply even then, but it seemed to me a violation of my self when he would direct things about in our lives. How far might he go if I just let it go on? He's not confused a bit about what a man is in relation to a woman and family. He takes his position seriously.

I remember my grandfather and the silent command he had. Could I be the woman my grandmother was? Because it seemed clear that my boyfriend defined himself in the same terms never having met my grandfather, and they're generations apart. Josh has made it clear that he has to be head of the household in order to fulfill his personal commitments to us. He was startled and frustrated that I should think otherwise. A very steady man, I knew exactly who and what he was and what he wanted and I defied it. It made no difference anyway, it was all too transparent. He was the man who would make me his wife. And I would eventually see for myself how wonderful Taken in Hand is.

I would rather take a belting now than to be enabled by law to wreck us as I have in so many ways. And believe me I have. It's not trivial. I mean, when he would try to force what had to be (finances, for exam-

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ple), only for the better of us, I would simply call the law to cement my points, duck the bigger commitments, the harder choices, and maintain my autonomy. And the ridiculous part is that he's so good at making money, saving and investing, and keeping order and calm in the house—when I let him, that is. I wanted to mold him, instead of allowing him to make me his wife. Submission was a game for bed, and outside of it I was always almost there but not quite.

I nearly crushed him economically. In our moments of power debates I was out to prove that I was every inch he was. Why??!! Talk about taming the shrew! Hey guys, I was that nightmare wife or girlfriend who thought to run you to the damnation of both of us! I fought his dominance to no end. Had he not been so committed to us and to his values and had he not believed he would eventually succeed, he would have dumped me long ago. But he has incredible faith and all I can think is wow! I'm so glad he saw through it all. Even now after so much, my alpha male continues to be just as he is, unflappable, he's never changed from what he is. He's a rock and steady on. He's an amazing man.

I need him only to be strong. Now I know how I fit into that, and his increasing strength is good and not to be feared. He's proven himself committed in so many ways to the very things I want. I could spend the rest of my life with him. Perhaps if my grandmother were still alive she could have helped me see the harmony that is meant to be, because I

thought of it by different standards. She would have told me (I know she would) that it's ok to let much be. She would have seen it right away. Wow, I've had some time to think.

Missing him with all my heart now, missing his arms, and feeling the huge pain of guilt for avoiding culpability by shifting it on to him... and boy do I miss his rescues from my financial mismanagement. This last realization is to such an extent that I prefer to not trust my mind, much less insist on my ways anymore. I've taken on a new approach, LOL. He's head of the household and instead of rescuing my messes he can put his talents forward. He was very right about so many things all along. Why couldn't I see it before?

When I cast aside feminist dogma, which has been a huge disservice to me anyway, a whole new world has opened up. I realized we are not just partners, that our attraction is gender oppositional, that living the fullest extent of that gender difference is the business of marriage, that for us especially there should be a boss-end of that arrangement and clearly it's not me. There is too much to lose by thinking independently rather than reciprocally. I realized that I couldn't just take parts of him and dispense with the rest without losing the man.

Instead of all the individualistic power I was supposed to prefer, no thanks to the feminists, I'm finding incredible power coming back to me when I submit to him. This of course is no surprise to him at all. He gives me so much. Strangest thing... The road to my self actualization as a

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woman is now defined by the extent that I let it go. But the hell I've put him through for us to get here...

When I finally saw the light I looked at him for the very first time and it stunned me! He's a man! By softening to a female state of being, I recognized where he was not soft. I embrace that now. He takes the struggle out of having to be hard, and together we're so much more.

He's a man with all the characteristics of a man! No less than my father or grandfather was, with the same fuses, the same buttons, the same quiet sternness, and the same inability and impatience for chatter. No wonder we couldn't talk our problems out endlessly like girlfriends as I had insisted. Forgive me... I've been married before and nothing in it caused me to realize what a real relationship is supposed to be. I thought those manly traits were part of the roles men play and no one was going to play a role with me. I thought those traits were not inherent! It strikes especially, that men are men no matter what relationship they are categorized in. They are actually men and there are certain things that cannot be dispensed with or disposed of.

For the first time in our 8-year relationship I'm no longer secretly hoping for him to become a man (whatever I thought that was). I actually have had one all along and haven't allowed it! Now I want nothing in between the full reality of him and me. He's been a consistent provider to my overspending despite his own pragmatics, and a protector for me and my children, he's great looking, he's dominant and trustworthy at 282

the same time, and he thrills me in bed. So what's my problem? The strangest thing is that I've loved him deeply all along, I mean deeply, but I didn't know how really. I had only allowed him the part that agreed with me, without allowing him the broader gratification for all he is.

At the 7-year point I had assumed that the relationship provided all there was to know of it. It's been the kind of relationship where you mourn for the days gone past because you cannot relive them, and yet you can't wait for the next day and the next. He has given me a life of anticipation, and yet each day I've only begun to live it.

The Taken in Hand epiphany came not upon seeing this site—although I would have been moved and am—it came upon realizing many things in his 9-month absence. Oh yes, the damage I've caused actually went that far. Now I bear an inescapable indebtedness, driven by an indescribable sweetness of heart to correct the errors and to let this relationship finally live as the thing it is. Yes I've told him but only by 5 words, before he assumed the position he knew would come. The way of his marriage proposal had a Harrison Ford quality to it. Stunning, he quietly said, "Your ex-husband doesn't know how to run a marriage."

He has every intention to. The nonsense is finally over and the business end of marriage is to begin. He returns in 16 days. He'll find the woman he always knew I would be.¹⁹¹

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"A DIFFICULT WIFE" (20 OCTOBER 2005)

This may be familiar.

I am Jewish and we all know stereotypes of the Jewish wife and mother.

But one disturbing real life example was from a coworker. He told of growing up with a domineering mother. She was depressed, swore everybody was against her. Hardly a day went by without her bawling out her husband.

She dominated everything. Nagged till her daughter found a husband and her son a wife. When the kids married she planned every detail to suit herself. (Her son-in-law pays to put her up in the Holiday Inn when she visits).

No matter how much you do for her, she'll carp. Yells at her quiet husband he's driving her crazy and if she jumps off the bridge he won't even care, the selfish man.

I met this woman at a Bar Mitzvah. Shook hands. Noticed she had numbers tattooed on her arm.

I learned the woman had been arrested and sent to Auschwitz for two years. Her mother and siblings died there. She survived. The soldier she eventually married was in a unit that helped liberate the camp. He was her savior and I think he still is. I suspect after 60 years they have strong ties however crazy.

I don't have much sympathy with difficult nagging people but sometimes you don't know their story.¹⁹²

"WHO IS THE SEXIEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD?" (30 OCTOBER 2005)

There was a survey taken a few years ago that I wish that I could quote the exact statistics. But, since I can't, let me give the gist of the survey.

It asked men to choose the woman with the sexiest legs. Some voted for a particular movie star. Others a singer or other entertainer. But, what surprised the surveyors the most was that a large percentage of the men said, "My wife!"

In an intimate relationship, from many men's perspective, it is the availability of his mate, her openness to him, and her attitude toward him that draws him in and keeps him coming back for more.

As we age, our bodies show the effect of time and wear and tear. But, as is often said, the mind is the most powerful sex organ that we have. Yes, men are visual, but our eyesight ages over time. We see fewer flaws than we saw when we were younger. Other aspects of the relationship become more satisfying.

I think that I'm like many husbands out there: my wife is the sexiest creature and still lights my fire after 26 years of marriage and three kids. Her bottom gets a lot of my attention—in many ways :-). She presents it to me like the special treasure that it is.¹⁹³

"HOW OUR RELATIONSHIP HAS CHANGED" (30 OCTOBER 2005)

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After going through a very bad part of our 23 year relationship my husband and I both decided that we truly loved each other and wanted to continue, but we needed to rekindle some of the earlier 'spark' to move us forward. Luckily this seemed to happen quite naturally and by deciding to be honest, open and considerate towards each other things started to get much better and be more fulfilling for both of us.

Some time later, after having considered other ways of enhancing our relationship, my husband came across Taken In Hand. It seemed like quite a fun idea so, after some discussion, I agreed to try it out with him as a way of providing an extra dimension to our every day lives.

So far we have been successful about moving into a satisfying and exciting new life that we are both happy with, but probably for quite different reasons.

For me Taken In Hand means that I have a reliable and attentive man who is looking out for my wellbeing and who is interested in me particularly. This makes me feel happy and secure in the knowledge that he is there for me because he wants to be, presumably because this arrangement is satisfying for him. It is hard to say exactly what has changed apart from everything because it is quite subtle.

Of course, there is discipline to be maintained and whilst this definitely provides a frisson of excitement it also causes fear about what exactly is going to happen.

I am strong and assertive but I enjoy my husband being in charge

because it makes me feel safe, cared for and feminine.

I don't do all of the chores but we both work full time and have always shared them because there is too much to do.

I agree to sex whenever my husband requests it, and I think we have sex more than before because we do something everyday but all the little parts become part of the whole so it's hard to say where it starts and ends.

I feel that lots of parts of life show submission but this is in a positive and consensual way, not a weak way. It is like a form of fun play that goes on for most of the time.

Husbands become more present because they enjoy being in charge and are interested in what is going on.

Most wives probably would enjoy spanking because it is a very strong and intimate form of sharing. It appeals to the inner child in us and it is sooo good to be comforted afterwards!

The wife does not need to go along with all of the man's demands and wishes especially if she knows he is wrong. She can just tell him that she disagrees but sometimes it might be best to be cautious and thoughtful about how she tells him so as to not offend him.

Taken In Hand husbands take such good care of their wives because they are very interested in them, love them particularly, enjoy connecting with them through their authority and get exactly what they want; a happy, satisfied, attentive, submissive but strong wife!¹⁹⁴

**"NOT A LOWER-CASE GIRL" (31 OCTOBER
2005)**

There is a commonly held view that all submissive persons should write their name in lower case to demonstrate their wholehearted submission to their head of the household. This may feel nice to some, but in my view it is not essential and above all should not be allowed to become some form of genuflection to be observed by all.

I refuse to have my girl write to me as a "lower-case person". Although she is the submissive and I am a life-long dominant man, she is someone I love and respect—she is my equal in all things. She is the one who has surrendered her submission to me and without that submission, I would have nothing in terms of dominance over her.

I am perhaps a bit old fashioned, I open the door for her and when we cross the road I take her arm, signaling when it is safe to cross. There is no need really, because she is not blind and is quite capable of crossing on her own, but apparently it feels nice to be taken care of. I carry out many domestic chores including cooking most of our meals. This does not diminish me in her eyes, far from it, it shows her that I really do love her and am not prepared to see her as my personal drudge. It would take nothing at all to let her take over all of the household chores—she does plenty already, but my love for her is such that I insist on equality in all things. This is new to her because her experience of men is;

they are the boss and she is secondary.

We operate a fairly simple form of DD. I don't micro-manage her life, though we have some rules. She is not to self-denigrate or try and put me down and we do not carp or shout at each other. We have disagreements, but these have to be worked out calmly and patiently and we do accept that we cannot agree on some things. I do not force my opinion on her, but instead thrill to the knowledge that I have the power to spank an independently minded woman—though not because she has disagreed with me.

She does get irate, impatient and snappy when her hormones play her up and I have been told to "F"-Off! occasionally, but knowing that once she gets this way with me, I have the right to tan her bottom, it is easy for me to resist replying in the same vein, so I take it on the chin, smile sweetly and mark her temporary lapse in decorum for future reference. There are some things she must do to stay out of trouble and some things she must not do, but apart from that we live together in love and harmony.

When she is to be spanked, her trepidation is palpable and rightly so, because the discipline is very real. When she is being spanked it is very noisy, she squirms and cries out, sometimes breaking down in tears. After she has been spanked she is cuddled warmly and it is at this point that it all comes together; she feels safe, looked after, warm and fuzzy and above all, deeply loved and cared for. At that point the demarcation line between domi-

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nance and submission is most clearly defined and without her calling me sir, eating out of the dog bowl, wearing a collar or writing her name in lower-case.¹⁹⁵

"RESISTANCE IS FUTILE" (2 NOVEMBER 2005)

Some Taken In Hand women need to be physically overpowered by their man. They need to know without any doubt that resistance is futile. And they can only discover that by resisting, and experiencing the futility of that resistance. They need to be able to be their strongest, most powerful self, *and yet still be overpowered by their man*. They need to know that the man has the ability to control them actively, and that a bit of resistance won't make him crumble, sulk, or stomp off in a tizzy. They need to know that his control is not all talk.

This can be very annoying or frustrating for some men. If a woman claims to be submissive (though note that most Taken In Hand women actually claim *not* to be submissive!) why doesn't she just do what he says? Does she want him to control her or doesn't she? Why should he control her if she does not submit? Isn't it disrespectful of her to resist?

No, actually, it is not disrespectful, it is necessary. Not for everyone—evidently there are women elsewhere who do not resist and who feel no need to do so—but in the Taken In Hand world, most women at least initially do resist, and need to resist, and actually, most men

here actively prefer a resistant woman, as Eric put it.

Whether the need to be bodily overpowered is inborn or a product of our culture, it is undeniable that many women in our culture feel that need. Biologists might say that it is about testing the man's strength to ensure that he will be able to protect the woman and her children. Religious people might point to Genesis 3:16, "Your desire for me for your husband, and he shall rule over you." Some might say that women desire to be raped and ruled by men. Others might say that being bodily overpowered creates more emotional intensity and more pleasure than when a man does not do that.

Whatever the cause, it is a fact that most Taken In Hand women feel a strong need to resist and to be thoroughly and completely overpowered, during the establishment of their Taken In Hand relationship. They want "non-consent"—actually consensual non-consent. Being thoroughly overpowered enables them finally to relax, to feel peaceful, to experience the man's control as being real and reliable, not just a game.

And it is fun! Whatever do some men have against wrestling and overpowering the woman they love? Where is the fun in having a doormat yes-woman for a wife, when you can have someone a bit more challenging and interesting and fun? Just how fragile are their egos, anyway?!

OK, OK, forgive me—that was a terrible joke: it is not that their egos are fragile, they merely have different preferences.

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Just don't think that all men have the same preferences, because they don't! Some men actively prefer a resistant woman. Many men enjoy the challenge and do not feel threatened by a strong woman who needs to be overpowered. They enjoy making the woman see that resistance is futile. If you are a woman who doubts this, do talk to men on this site, and read the quotations section. Don't think that you have to give up this aspect of yourself in the name of submission. The state achieved through the husband's active control is so much better, so much deeper, so much more fulfilling—for the man as well as for the woman.¹⁹⁶

"IT'S ALL MY PARENTS' FAULT!" (5 NOVEMBER 2005)

"I blame the parents," people say, when a child grows up to be. . . well. . . a little odd. But I wonder how many here attribute their interest in male-controlled relationships to their parents. I have written about my grandparents' marriage, but my parents have a lot to answer for too.

My parents have mellowed a lot now, but they used to be sticklers for formal English etiquette and good manners, and you have to read this story in the light of that fact to understand my astounded reaction.

I remember a family party once in which there were so many people present that when my mother came into the room, there was no free chair for her.

My guess would have been that she would have gone to get a chair from another room. What she actual-

ly did—without the faintest trace of any self-consciousness, embarrassment, or irony—was to glide into the room and kneel down and sit at my father's feet, saying something like, "Well this is quite appropriate. This is where I *should* be."

I had to pick my jaw up off the floor! It was so unapologetically and blatantly submissive!

Do you have any such memories of strikingly Taken In Hand statements or actions on the part of your parents—one that might have had an effect on you in your formative years?¹⁹⁷

"PORNOGRAPHY PREVENTS AND CORRODES RELATIONSHIPS" (9 NOVEMBER 2005)

Pornography is fine, in and of itself, and it can be a pleasant diversion for those who are not in a relationship. But it will prevent or corrode a connected relationship. And a completely connected relationship is potentially the most exciting and fulfilling experience possible, and one that can continue indefinitely.

Even viewing porn with your partner, as an instructional example, could be damaging. At least subconscious concerns about comparisons are unavoidable, and the consequences of insecurities would be inevitable. It would be preferable to look at descriptions and then relax and experiment and laugh together as you made mistakes. Being anywhere close to perfect is not the point; a relationship is not a performance.

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Private porn or fantasies about other people, while you are in a relationship is, in a sense, an infidelity. Actively seeking to be aroused by someone or something other than your partner is a partial definition of an 'open' relationship which, itself, is almost the definition of a lack of a relationship. Looking at porn to become aroused and then using your relationship partner to masturbate seems foolish and extravagant. Would it not be less expensive and less complicated to use a battery operated sex toy instead?

But the much more interesting issue is the possibility of achieving a connected relationship. There is a distinct qualitative difference between casual sex and sex within such a relationship.

The connection removes limits on intensity, and the levels of excitement and pleasure that are possible cannot be understood without being experienced. The relationship acts as a magnifier in direct proportion to intentional vulnerability and trust without reluctance, which depend, in part, on the extent to which the partners take care of each other and put each other first.

A fully connected relationship is the most powerful magnifier, and absolute exclusivity is its most essential element. Everything must be considered with respect to the relationship, and nothing can be allowed to come between the two people involved.

Anything with even a hint of intimacy or sexuality must be kept strictly within the relationship. This applies to activities ranging from what would be obvious infidelities

such as sex or kissing, to private dinners or dancing, to going to strip clubs or looking at porn, and even to less apparent insensitivities such as judging a beauty contest. Requesting that your partner share you is a form of rejection. It degrades your partner and diminishes the relationship. You either do mean everything to each other or you do not. "Do" is black and white. Only "do not" can have shades of gray.

But exclusivity will create a vacuum that you must fill for each other, actively and without hesitation. Some of the ways will be creative and complex. But the most meaningful may turn out to be as simple as turning off the television and telephone and giving each other undivided attention whenever there is a need to talk, and especially when one of you is in a bad way. You must always protect and support each other totally, unconditionally and above all else.

And you must engage passionately with each other often, and not always overtly sexually (though sexuality will continuously permeate the relationship). Look for ways to take care of each other, and spoil each other rotten whenever possible. And never demean or ridicule, or say cutting words that can wound in ways that never truly heal; do not forget that your only treasure's heart is made of glass.¹⁹⁸

**"HE ISN'T INTERESTED IN OR CAPABLE OF
TAKING YOU IN HAND?" (11 NOVEMBER
2005)**

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What if he is either not interested in or incapable of taking me in hand?

Many wives who discover this site want their husbands to take them in hand, but if their marriage has not been a Taken In Hand one in the past, this change is not always easy. People tend to keep interacting how they always have. To make a dramatic change, it is necessary to overcome the "momentum" of the antecedent relationship style.

That does not mean that such a situation is hopeless. Couples can and do make this change. But it sometimes takes a lot of time and trial and error before it feels as though it is working.

Some men are not actually interested in taking their wife in hand, or don't really understand what their wife wants or how to do it, or they are attracted and appalled in equal measure. Some experience their wife's request as an onerous demand instead of an exciting opportunity to increase their own joy and pleasure in the marriage.

But another problem some couples have is that the wife who wants to be taken in hand makes it difficult or impossible for her husband to do so. She does not intend to sabotage her husband's attempts to make this change, but that is what she does. She does not see that that is what she is doing, but she is. To her, the explanation for the fact that she is not being taken in hand lies not within her own conduct but in what she sees as her husband's lack of ability to master her. She thinks that *he doesn't have it in him* or *isn't dominant*, and this further undermines

his efforts and his desire to take her in hand.

"But I would never tell him I think he's a wimp," you protest. Or "But I don't think he's a wimp, I think he just isn't interested in this stuff, so can't get his head around it."

Do you think that you manage to keep your disappointment and damning judgements to yourself? If you are able to successfully hide these things from your husband, you are an unusual woman. The chances are that if you think that your husband doesn't have it in him to take you in hand, or isn't interested in taking you in hand, you are inadvertently systematically sabotaging the very learning process that could lead to what you want.

One of the biggest barriers to any kind of change in a relationship is that people naturally interpret events in the light of their view of the other person. You think that your husband is a little mouse without a dominant bone in his body, and that is how you see him, even if he has actually changed or was never a mouse in the first place. When you interpret his behaviour in the light of that damning picture of him, you interact with him as though he were the little mouse you think he is. And when you do that, you tend to push him into the very role you are hoping he will change.

How would you feel if your husband were constantly disappointed in you? Constantly wanting you to be like the women in movies, or like his mother? How would you feel if even when you tried to make changes accordingly, he didn't even no-

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tice? If your every effort was not good enough? How would you feel?

Think of it from his point of view. You've been married a while, and you have not previously given him any indication that you want him to take you in hand. He, being a decent man, has thus not done so. But now you are saying that you want a Taken In Hand relationship. He may be interested, or he may feel cautious, or he may wonder if you really want it, or he may not be sure exactly what you want, or whether or not it is for him. He loves you and he is prepared to give it a try, but he needs to think about it and find his own way to take you in hand, he does not want to be dictated to by you. He also (very wisely, in fact) wants to take it slowly, and he doesn't necessarily want to talk to you explicitly about it. Creating a Taken In Hand relationship is an evolutionary process, not a recipe he must follow. Were he to follow your recipe, you would not be satisfied, because you would be in control!

You interpret his refusal to follow your recipe as him not being interested, or as him not having it in him, and you start trying to push him. This really annoys him and makes the whole thing seem like a real chore and of no possible benefit to him, and he stops moving towards taking you in hand. Worse, you seem completely blind to the changes he has already made. What he has done to take control and take you in hand not only seems to be not enough for you, you have not even noticed that he has changed at all. You are still interacting with him as

though he has made no effort whatever to take you in hand.

This is painful to him, or very annoying, or both. He has made himself vulnerable by trying to give the woman she loves what she wants, and she hasn't even noticed. He feels your dissatisfaction and disappointment, and he is discouraged and annoyed. He stops bothering. What's the point? You are blind to his efforts anyway. Why bother? To him it seems as though it is not him you want but a fantasy hero marionette who will act a part in your play, with you pulling all the strings. If he does have a dominant bone in his body, he is likely to find this completely unacceptable! Think about it! It is insulting. It is disconnecting instead of connecting. It is any wonder that he has misgivings?

So he retreats back to how things were before. And you are even more frustrated.

If you are just beginning your Taken In Hand journey, how can you avoid undermining your husband's attempts to learn to take you in hand?

By being patient and positive. By noticing and enjoying the smallest changes in a Taken In Hand direction. By noticing and enjoying the things he is already doing that are masculine or masterful. By giving him the respect he deserves as a man and as your husband, whether or not you think he deserves it. By thinking about him for a change, instead of yourself. By giving him the time and space to do it his way. By accepting and appreciating his small changes rather than feeling frustrated and dissatisfied with

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them. By striving to see him as the dominant man you want him to be, and letting that more positive view of him inform all your interactions with him.

And when I say that you should strive to see him as the man you wish he were, I do not mean that he is not that man, I am just using that form of words because that is your perception of him. But actually, as I have said above, the chances are that what you see in him may not be accurate at all. He may well already be the man you wish he were, but you just haven't noticed. Or he may be moving in that direction, but you haven't noticed. Or there may be many things about him that are that man you wish he were, but all you see is the glaring gaps where he is not – or seems not to you.

Interacting with him as though he already is that man will give the two of you the best possible chance to make positive changes. It is the best way to minimise the chance that you will inadvertently prevent him expressing the dominant side of him that may have been hidden for a long time.* It is also the best way to open your eyes to the man he already is.¹⁹⁹

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **What if he is either not interested in or incapable of taking me in hand?**]

"EFFECT POSITIVE CHANGE BY ACTING AS IF..." (12 NOVEMBER 2005)

In an earlier article[†] I explained that women who want their husband to take them in hand sometimes inadvertently undermine their husband's efforts to change. In that piece, I made some suggestions to help you facilitate rather than sabotage change. In this piece, I'd like to take a closer look at one technique that can make all the difference: "acting as if".

If you want your husband to take control, one of the many things you can do that might help is to *act as if* the change has already happened. I shall explain why this works to facilitate change in a moment, but first, what exactly does it mean to "act as if" the changes have already happened? How do you "act as if"?

Begin by asking yourself the following question: *If the change had already happened, what specifically would I be doing differently?*

That is to say, what *observable actions* of yours would be different. Be specific. The answer is not "I would feel great!" I am asking what you would be doing differently, not how you would be feeling.

Yes, of course you would feel great. How would that show? What would you be doing that would tell your husband and others that you feel great?

You would be smiling more. You might be more animated. You might speak with a more enthusiastic tone

[†] "He isn't interested in or capable of taking you in hand?" 11 November 2005.

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of voice. You might be giving your husband more of what he wants. You might be unusually laidback about problems. (How would this manifest itself in specific, observable actions?) Your face and body language might look more relaxed, peaceful, serene, and happy. You might be more attentive to your husband's needs. (How would this manifest itself in specific, observable actions?) You might go out of your way to please him.

If he were taking you in hand, you might speak to him more respectfully, more lovingly, more happily. You might be more careful not to do things you know he hates. You might make more of an effort to do things for him that he would like. You might consult him more. You might be expressing more appreciation for him. You might accept decisions he makes instead of fighting him. (How would this manifest itself in specific, observable actions?) You might want him more sexually, and convey that with your eyes and body language. You might be less demanding and a lot more giving. (How would this manifest itself in specific, observable actions?) Even your tone of voice might convey more respect and deference and admiration for him.

Ask yourself what you would be doing differently if things were as you want them to be, and make a written list of every possible specific, observable difference. Check that everything on your list is specific and observable. When you have created this list, instead of waiting for your husband to change (and as I have said, often the husband has

already changed and the wife simply can't see it) change yourself. Start making the changes you have listed—the changes you think would be the result of your husband taking you in hand.

Yes, I know. You think this is a crazy idea, but it is not. It is actually a standard technique that gets results. It is a way of facilitating change instead of sabotaging it.

"Acting as if" works in a number of different ways. Dwelling on the negative makes people feel worse. Acting as if things were how you would like them to be takes your focus off what is lacking and encourages you to focus on the positive. It takes your focus off yourself and puts it more on the relationship and the other person. This makes you feel better whatever else is happening.

"Acting as if" stops you pushing for change, and makes real change possible. It concentrates your mind on changing yourself instead of changing the other person. Trying to change the other person is fraught with danger and likely to be counterproductive. It is disrespectful and can be controlling. When you instead "act as if" things were how you want them to be, you are effectively giving him control, and you are also being nicer to him. And when you are kinder and more considerate, most people respond positively and become more generous-hearted towards you in turn.

Think of the relationship as a system. When you make changes by, for example, "acting as if" things were how you want them to be, you are making changes in the system

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that affect the system as a whole. Other parts of the system can be affected by even a small change somewhere in the system.

Some readers may be asking: isn't this technique manipulative? Actually no. In no way does it depend on keeping it a secret. Your husband might well be a psychologist who fully understands this technique, and it could still work. You could mention that you are "acting as if" and that would not be a problem (unless in telling him you were dumping yet more unhappiness and dissatisfaction on him). It is more about taking the pressure off your husband and changing yourself instead. That is not manipulation; that is taking action yourself to solve your own problem.

You may think that "acting as if" would make your husband less likely to take you in hand, because he would have less reason to take you in hand. You may think that behaving badly would be more likely to have the desired effect, because then he would have more reason to take you in hand. Big mistake. Colossal, egregious error! To provoke him by behaving badly (apart from playfully, which is entirely different) would be to subject him to a very nasty form of blackmail. If he has any sense, any self-respect, and any dominant tendencies, that is likely to disgust him. It may even make him do the opposite of what you want. He is much more likely to find it in his heart to give you what you want if you are being kind to him than if you are behaving badly.

"Acting as if" things were as you want them gives both of you a taste

of the experience of your husband being in control. This can be surprisingly powerful for the woman as well as the man. You may be thinking that this is a lot of nonsense, and that the only thing that will satisfy you is being taken in hand and brought to submission, and I have every sympathy with that idea. However, if we have already established that that is not happening (at the moment, at any rate), it is in your interests to stop thinking about what you don't have, and start enjoying what you do have. And when you do things like "acting as if" he were in control and taking you in hand, you are giving him authority and control, and this helps you to become attuned to much more subtle control than you may currently think you need.

Women who put their heart into this tend to grow to appreciate the smallest expression of authority on the man's part. When the woman consults the man, this in itself can be thrilling. At first, the man may well react as though he finds it most peculiar to be consulted, but at some point he may simply reply by telling the woman what to do. The woman then experiences the pleasure and the thrill of being controlled.

The power of that thrill can be very surprising if you have in the past been narrowly focused on control through spanking. You can become attuned to much more subtle control if you give yourself the chance. But it might well be that when your man has the experience of being in control over time, he will develop a taste for it and change himself.

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You may not notice any positive changes immediately. It takes time, sometimes a very long time. But often, when a man gets used to being treated well and to having control, he grows into that position of authority, gradually changing as he does so. As he learns to enjoy having control, that starts to inform his thinking and actions. And as a result of his consequent changes, his wife gets very excited and feels deeply peaceful too. She melts, and becomes ever more adoring and thrilled, and that inspires him further.

“Acting as if” things were as you want them tends to stop any vicious circle in its tracks and replace it with a virtuous circle in which each tiny positive change leads to a host of other positive changes, which snowball into more and more positive changes. Somewhere along the line, you may yet find yourself being thoroughly and violently and painfully taken in hand and cursing yourself for having given your husband the idea!²⁰⁰

“THE MAKING OF A DOMINANT MAN” (14 NOVEMBER 2005)

It’s not easy, being a single alpha male, you know. “Do I look dominant in this?” you ask yourself as you try on a new suit. “Now, where can I find some really bossy black boots?” You go flirting around town like a right heteropolitan (as single manly men are now called by marketing experts, they tell me) trying to emit intensely masculine vibes to those nice women whose eyes you

fix, and on whom you advance determinedly. You try in everything you do to live the “alpha” way so that anyone interested might notice. Why? Well, it’s partly wanting to attract and meet a brilliant Taken in Hand woman, of course, and partly wanting to be the best partner you can when you do meet her.

I can practically hear all the women here shouting “No, no, no!” Margaret Thatcher-style, at the screen: “*You just are “alpha” or you’re not; it’s no good trying to be like that, or posing. That’s exactly the kind of narcissistic man who’s no good to the women on Taken in Hand.*” Well, fair enough—on one level I agree. Narcissism is silly, and no doubt has a lot of potential to tarnish masculine appeal. The qualities a man has that might attract a Taken in Hand woman are likely to be unchangeable things about him, things he isn’t conscious of and hasn’t knowingly developed. Dominance—the desire or the need to dominate a woman, sexually and in love—is either part of your personality, or it’s not, and of course I believe it’s part of mine or I wouldn’t be writing here. I don’t think things are quite as simple as that, though.

There are lots of things we think of as “natural” abilities, but that doesn’t stop us developing them consciously as best we can. Languages, for instance: some people say I have a gift for them. Well, I won’t argue with them, but what’s certainly true is that I’ve worked at my French and my German for hours and days over many years, and it’s that work that’s made me a linguist, more than any innate talent.

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And it's the same with all abilities, isn't it? If your friends admire your public speaking, your cooking, or singing, your tennis, your painting or your style, I bet they often talk as though the difference between you and them was natural ability, and they may be partly right; but I'm sure you know it's about more than that. To be a good public speaker needs not just practice, but work, at cutting out all those stammers and stumbles, and thought, about how to avoid being nervous. To be a really good cook means thinking about food, a lot—Gordon Ramsay would agree, I'm sure. To sing well, to paint well—these all require serious effort and application. So does being good at sex. So does building a successful, happy relationship or marriage.

So if you're a dominant man, conscious of how important that is to you and how your sexuality might make someone happy, not only is it in your interest to reflect on that fact—I think you have an obligation to do so, so that you can be and become the most attractive and best male leader that you can. After all, if you have a partner, you want her to reflect on her attitude to you, don't you? To be the best, most obedient, submissive woman she can be, and please you more and more with every day? If you're like me you do. So you should be doing the same for her, shouldn't you? If you're in a relationship, great—you have someone who'll benefit from your constant striving and success in being and becoming the man she wants you to be. You've an obvious reason for improving all the time. If you're

single, it's not quite so clear: if you think a lot about making yourself more attractive to the kind of woman you want, and being and becoming a seriously admirable authoritative man, you quickly fall into the paradox that it's no good being self-conscious about it, and the risk of thinking too much about shoes.

Even so, I still think Taken in Hand masculinity—male leadership, if you like—is not just a personality trait: it's a state of mind that can be lived and practised, and should be. Alpha males may be born, but they also make themselves.²⁰¹

"MR DARCY, MR KNIGHTLEY AND THE TAKEN IN HAND IDEAL" (23 NOVEMBER 2005)

Jane Austen has been busy lately. In the last decade or so, full-length feature films have been made of 'Emma' (twice), 'Sense and Sensibility' and, this year (2005), 'Pride and Prejudice'. There was already a 'Pride and Prejudice' firmly embedded in the nation's hearts, the recent TV adaptation starring Jennifer Ehle and Colin Firth, and those with memories as long as mine can remember an early-70s BBC TV series of 'Emma' starring Doran Godwin. We have also had one 'Persuasion' and one 'Mansfield Park'. What a pity the lady didn't write more.

Of all Miss Austen's oeuvre, I would guess that 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Emma' are the most consistently popular—especially with females. On a recent and rare visit to the cinema to see the new 'P & P', I estimate I was the only male in a

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fairly well packed house. The main attraction of 'P & P' is said to be the personality of Mr Darcy. To get Darcy "right" is considered an achievement. By all accounts Colin Firth pulled it off, the new chap didn't—quite, though he took a good shot at it.

By contrast, the main attraction in 'Emma' is Emma herself, particularly the contradictions and indulgences in her character (usually kindly meant) which lead her into error. She is then taken in hand—there is no other term for it—by Mr Knightley, who in many respects is Mr Darcy's literary double. Mr Knightley in fact conforms almost ideally to the Taken In Hand archetype male (willing to administer discipline as well as love, wears riding boots etc.) whereas poor Darcy, utterly crushed by Elizabeth's initial rejection, made to feel his own faults keenly and to acknowledge them openly, is a seething mass of wimpish complexities by comparison. He accepts the pain she dishes out and benefits from it. How Takeninhand is that?

Far more Taken In Hand is the verbal spanking ("Badly done, Emma! Badly done indeed!") Knightley hands out after the Miss Bates episode on Box Hill. This is probably the most "alpha" speech Miss Austen gives to any of her leading males and yet Knightley remains totally uninteresting. Alongside Darcy, he is a cardboard construct.

Darcy is ten times more attractive a leading male than Knightley, in film, TV and book. The latter is a prig, brooding judgmentally on the sidelines. Darcy does his share of brooding, admittedly, and certainly

he is judgmental. But he is also wrong with a capital R, about Elizabeth and her family (though not, as it turns out, about Wickham). Taken In Hand men are seldom wrong, least of all as spectacularly as this. Putting matters right (as Darcy generously does) is the act of a gentleman, but not necessarily of a Taken In Hand chap.

So if there is a literary message to be drawn from the pen of England's most beloved novelist, it is that the Ideal Taken In Hand man may not exist—and if he does, he is as liable as Knightley to be a humourless, critical martinet. He will be No Fun. Real men are surely more interesting than that—and more fun. They have their complexities too, and sometimes they even need to make mistakes and be slapped down for them, because this is something everybody requires from time to time. This is what happens to Mr Darcy, one of the most romantic male heroes in fiction, and it hardly seems to diminish his appeal. Perhaps the definition of the ideal Taken In Hand male is subconsciously broader than anyone thinks?²⁰²

"PROTECTIVE MEN" (1 DECEMBER 2005)

Many women crave the protection of men. Now why exactly? Well maybe some professor of anthropology would have some sort of primitive survival explanation.

Protection from what, you ask? You name it. Do you know how hard and scary it is to be a woman out there on your own? Do you know the things that can happen to

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women if no one is looking out for them?

I'm making women sound too much like victims, and that's not right. But to feel protected is to feel loved. It means the man gives a damn about what happens to you. It may mean he's furious you come home at 9pm instead of 6pm when he was expecting you home. That's a gift. To have someone worried about you and what the hell happens to you. In my own heart a Taken In Hand man is fiercely protective. Two hundred years ago, sometimes it was nothing more than protecting the woman's honor; for example, someone badmouths her and husband thrashes the man who did so.

Would I be protective of my Taken In Hand man? Sure, but in a more feminine way: if he were ill, if he were hungry, if he were tired, if his feet ached, I would meet his needs; I would protect his reputation in public with my life. Does this make any sense? You protect your man by making sure his every need is met, without being a doormat, just out of love. And in return a Taken In Hand man gives so much back.²⁰³

"MISSING MY HUSBAND'S CONTROL" (3 DECEMBER 2005)

We have been busy for the last month. We went out of town for Thanksgiving, our kids have had a lot of activities, and I had a medical procedure. These kept us busy and distracted enough that my husband's control of me was at best minimum.

We spent Thanksgiving break visiting some dear family friends out of town. When we are out of town visiting friends or family and staying in their home we are obviously not going to engage in any physical correction or connection. Usually we get a guest room or a child's room without a lock so even the hope of sexual connection isn't there. No connective or corrective spankings will be occurring under those circumstances. The last time we were visiting my sister we were able to go away to a hotel on an anniversary for a night so we did get some time there. Yet that was only one night out of ten. There was lots of connective spanking and sex on that one night making up for lost time!

Generally, when we are visiting friends or family my husband goes into relax mode, which is very non-controlling. We are both happy visiting with our loved ones and so we can get by with a little less connecting. We spend a lot of time dividing up into men's and women's groups. The men go golfing or to a guy flick or play a board game. The women take the kids here or there or cook or just visit. There is very little him and me time. We get into bed each night and I always feel distant. We don't hug or kiss. We just roll over and go to sleep. I hate that feeling and it's hard to get back to closeness after we have been distant.

He usually shows no authority whatsoever when we are on these vacations unless he and I get away alone. I don't think he feels comfortable being controlling in those situations. It strikes too strong a chord against the cultural tone of our fami-

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lies and out of town friends. He plays the passive husband that he used to be. He doesn't yet know how to maintain his authority without seeming bossy and controlling in the eyes of our loved ones.

I understand this and I am not angry about it. I am not really even frustrated. I guess I am just a bit saddened by the closeness we lose. He doesn't want to be considered an abusive controlling man by others who wouldn't understand that while I in no way want to be abused I love being controlled. We make the best of it and try to reconnect when we get home. It usually takes a while to feel back to normal again.

In addition to that I had a minor medical procedure that would require the doctor to see my rear end. My husband did not want to leave any proof of our unconventional lifestyle and neither did I. It seems to me there are rarely marks and yet I can see only so much of myself! He tells me sometimes there are some marks and he doesn't want to take a chance. So again no spankings for a week and very little sex for that week.

All in all it has been tough on our closeness. He is working on maintaining control without the use of physical correction. It works a little bit and yet when I know he won't spank me I am certainly not as likely to accept his control. He does things like not allowing me to have any alcoholic beverages on any day when I get snotty or threatening to take away other privileges. That works fairly well. I am not so rebellious that I would not accept his consequences. Sometimes he physi-

cally restrains me or squeezes some part of my body hard enough that I say "OK I'll do what you say!" He doesn't have to spank me to remind me of his physical superiority. I can feel it in other ways. I love it when he does that. Yet he doesn't do it too often. He is stressed and busy right now. I don't think he has the emotional energy to deal with me that way.

Saturday night our out of town company will be gone and I will be well enough from my procedure that I have a whopper coming. I am excited and nervous at the same time. I know it will probably be a hard one and I know I have it coming. I have been snotty and disobedient many times lately. I don't like it when I'm like that and neither does he. I have been pushing his buttons to feel his control. We both know I need this spanking. I need it emotionally. I need to feel his control in a physical way. He needs to feel the control he owns. It helps him realize his control outside of the bedroom. It confirms his dominance over me and my willingness to submit to his authority and my desire for him to rule me.

I am afraid yet I am looking forward to Saturday. I miss feeling his dominance in that physical way. I miss the sexual connection we find afterwards. I miss the emotional closeness we feel for days afterwards. I miss the respect I feel for him when he is assertive. I love that side of him and I so rarely get to see it or feel it lately. Perhaps we will come to a place where we can maintain that connectedness without any physical corrections. We are getting

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closer to that place but so far we aren't there yet.²⁰⁴

"THY ROD AND STAFF, BY EDWARD ANTHONY: A BOOK REVIEW" (11 DECEMBER 2005)

I was aware from an early age of my own interest in spanking, I was always slightly embarrassed by it, thinking it very strange. I always felt very self-conscious when watching spanking scenes in movies or TV shows, if anyone else was present I always worried that they might notice how avid my interest was. As I got older, I became aware my interest was not that unusual, and that many other shared it. The material on offer that dealt with the subject was not, however, particularly enticing to me. There were the rather sleazy men's magazines that dealt with the subject, but they were so obviously aimed at men, and much of the material they contained was so unattractive, that it didn't do much for me. Fictional books that touched on the subject of submission and dominance, like *Story of O* and John Norman's *Gor* books, were too bizarre and extrem for my taste.

Then when I was about 25 I read the first serious non-fiction book I had ever seen on the subject *The English Vice*, by Ian Gibson. This did not do much to make me feel better about my fascination with the subject. Mr Gibson's opinion in unequivocal, that the desire to spank or be spanked is a vicious perversion and evidence of a sick and warped mind. This didn't actually put me off being spanked, but it didn't do any-

thing to alleviate the vaguely guilty and embarrassed feelings I had about it. I didn't think I was really sick and warped, but Mr Gibson thought I was.

Some fourteen years later, I was wandering round Waterstones when I chanced upon a copy of *Thy Rod and Staff*, by Edward Anthony, in the History section. When I picked it up and started browsing, I soon realised that this was a very different kind of book from Mr Gibson's vicious polemic against "the English Vice". Mr Anthony seemed to think that it was okay to be interested in spanking, that it was possible to be a sane, intelligent and witty person (as he evidently was) and still like spanking. I walked around Waterstones clutching this book for about 15 minutes before I finally plucked up courage to buy it, then when I got home I couldn't put it down until I had finished it.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part "This Filthy Vice" (a quotation from George Bernard Shaw), deals with the decline of the use of corporal punishment in public life in recent times, and the possible reasons why people nevertheless continue to be fascinated by the subject. He pays particular attention to the works of Havelock Ellis, who was alone among psychologists in taking a sympathetic view of the subject. Discussing what makes spanking different from other acts of pain infliction Edward Anthony writes:

The man who is erotically aroused by ritually smacking his wife's bottom (let us suppose she enjoys it no less than he) is actually excited by

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what? The love of giving pain to another? Only that? In that case, why not pull her hair or punch her face, or slash her skin, or humiliate her in public with a few cruel words? The answer is that these activities would almost certainly have the opposite effect to that sought: they would subdue desire.

This passage resonated with me because it was what I had always thought without being able to put it into words clearly, my desire to be spanked was not purely about wanting pain or humiliation, since other things could cause me much more acute suffering in both. Spanking was something different and special.

Another thing I realised when reading the book is that my own interest in spanking, rather than being extreme and strange as I had always thought, was positively tepid compared to some. There is a wonderful quotation from a letter written by the composer Percy Grainger to a friend on reading a book called *The History of the Rod* (one of those books that purported to be “serious” discussion of the subject:

Yesterday I bought a book entitled “The History of the Rod”, dealing with the use of the whip in all countries and times. Seldom in my life have I gone through such a lecherous day as yesterday. My head ached, eyes burnt, body shook, of the excitement of reading what people have invented in my greatest speciality...

Edward Anthony discusses spankings in books, notably having a particular fascination with books in which adolescent boys are whipped by attractive young women. he be-

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comes positively lyrical when describing the scene in *Anne of Avonlea* where Anne Shirely whips Anthony Pye, contrasting it favourably with the more savage passages of a similar kind in *My Brilliant Career* and *The Rainbow*. He writes:

There can hardly be a male passive flagellant who would not joyfully change places with Anthony Pye, and afterwards, like him, offer allegiance to Anne of Green Gables; friendship and adoration having replaced hostility and defiance by means of the sweetest imaginable catharsis.

In Part II “The Flagellant Experience” he writes about what people actually do, and the possible reasons why:

Flagellation is obviously an activity where pain and pleasure are mingled, but there is more to it than that. The pain, for example, must be of a highly specialised kind, and, as a general rule, applied to a highly specified part of the human body. Nor is the mere application of pain enough—it must be administered under tightly controlled circumstances, with rules, and only by selected individuals....To declare, therefore, that the object of flagellation is to administer or receive pain, is about as comprehensively accurate as saying that the sole purpose of seduction is procreation.

That was another passage that resonated with me, it's got to be done in the right way, in the right place, and by the right person, in order for it to work. It's not just some vague generalised desire for pain. It's about so much more than just suffering.

He discusses the famous Spencer Spanking Plan devised by a Mrs

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Spencer who recommended that couples should spank each other for—discipline”. Writing about the failure of this to catch on, Mr anthony suggests:

Two-way discipline with the same partner works against the flow of hierarchy that is a vital part of dominant-submissive relationships, consensual or otherwise.

That was something I recognised as explaining what I had always wondered about, why I so disliked the idea of being able to spank the man who spanked me (I did once know somebody who wanted me to do this). I wanted the hierarchy to remain unchanged, with him the spanker and me the spankee, I didn't want to be able to take it in turns.

He discusses the variety of fantasy scenarios people enjoy, the master/pupil, master/slave scenarios etc. He's particularly amusing when discussing the effort that a submissive may have to make to convince themselves that the person spanking is the perfect dominant:

The hypothetical husband who smacks his wife across his knee every now and again—with her consent, maybe even at her suggestion—as an enjoyable preliminary to lovemaking, is only pretending, pretending, to be an authoritarian. He is acting a part, just as she is—in their everyday lives they may well behave entirely differently—and the success of the production will depend to a very great extent on their suspension of disbelief, itself enabled or crippled by the quality of otherwise of the available thespian skills. A tem-

porarily submissive female may require a very great effort of will to convince herself, even on the most fleeting and insubstantial level, that a very short man with a squeaky voice who keeps mispronouncing the Words of Power is actually a confident and capable superman, whose word is law, whose intentions are not to be flouted, and whose iron-muscle thighs constitute an altar on which all sins will be washed clean. That it can be achieved at all is probably due to the overmastering qualities of fundamental sexual desire. (“Close your eyes and imagine he's Sean Connery.”)

This is one of my favourite passages from the whole book, and I recognised it as being something I'd done myself, I had had to struggle in the past to convince myself that the man spanking me was the authentic dominant male, not just someone doing an imitation in order to gratify my desires. What the book couldn't address was my very strong desire to feel that my husband's dominance was real, not just an act put on for the duration of the spanking. This is a book about spanking however, not about Taken In Hand relationships, and it couldn't explain all my feelings.

Different varieties of dominant personalities are discussed, the “nonsense lover” being the one who came closest to my own fantasies, the one who pops up so often in mainstream films where the exasperated hero wallops the heroine. Other personalities I found less appealing, having no interest in wick-

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ed uncles, schoolmasters, slavemasters, etc.

Chapter 13 "The Rite" discusses the ritualised nature of flagellation, and I recognised how true this was. Mr anthony describes the seven distinct stages of the proto-ritual:

1. Commission. The "crime" usually an error of commission or omission—takes place, needless to say, with every expectation of...
2. Detection. the Dominant "detects" the error. This leads inexorably to...
3. Confrontation. The guilty party is faced with the evidence of fault. Past "record" is invoked, judgement delivered and sentence passed.
4. apprehension. a period of formal "waiting for it". Its purpose is to increase tension.
5. Preperation. The culprit is ordered to prepare. (Posture, clothing etc)Alternatively, and if the scenario is apposite, the dominant may forcibly lead the submissive to the place of punishment and personally make all ready.
6. Execution. the penalty is inflicted with the chosen rod.
7. Aftermath. The culprit is "forgiven". This may lead directly to more orthodox physical lovemaking.

This ritual is played out in our own house four or five times a week, and I never, ever get tired of it. It produces the same thrill every time. Endless repetition does nothing to dim the excitement. Particularly stage 4. Apprehension—the longer I have to wait the greater the rising tide of excitement.

Discussing the possibility of the submissive being forcibly restrained, he writes:

Without the culprit being offered even the chance to accept the punishment submissively, all possible redemptive focus is removed. It is also an unbalanced punishment. Restraints may well serve to admit the infliction of greater than usual pain, but they also almost entirely remove the shaming component since the culprit has been overpowered by superior force.

That's something else that resonated with me. I knew that having to submit voluntarily to being spanked was much more thrilling than being forcibly overpowered, now I knew why. The delicious feeling that came with voluntary submission would be entirely lacking if I was restrained.

Part III "Flagellation and Society" discusses why people today might desire to be spanked, and suggest some desire for a hierarchical relationship in a democratic age. A quotation from a letter to Havelock Ellis from a female correspondent produced a start of recognition:

Submission to the man's will is still, and always must be, the prelude to pleasure, and the association of ideas will probably always produce this much misunderstood instinct. Now, I find, indirectly from other women and directly from my own experience, that, when the point in dispute is very important, and the man exerts his authority, the desire to get one's own way completely obliterates the sexual feeling, while, conversely, in small things, the sexual feeling obliterates the desire to have one's own way. Where the two are nearly equal a conflict between them ensues and I

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can stand aside and wonder which will get the best of it, though I encourage the sexual feeling when possible, as, if the other conquers, it leaves a sense of mental irritation and physical discomfort. A man should command in small things, as in nine cases out of ten this will produce excitement. He should advise in large matters, or he may find either that he is unable to enforce his orders or that he produces a feeling of dislike and annoyance he was far from intending.

There again I recognised myself, in the conflicting desires to have my own way, and to obey my husband, and realising that I felt happier and more satisfied if I obeyed him than if I was in conflict with him, in other words if I let the sexual feeling prevail over the desire to get my own way.

There is a lot of material in this book that does not appeal to me on a personal level, I have no interest in recreating childhood experiences, for instance, or in schools or slavery or dominant lady governesses, but what this book did for me was to make me feel better about my own interest, to realise that it might be kinky, but that it didn't mean I was sick or in need of psychiatric help or anything, that it was okay to like being spanked, and to like thinking about it.

It is by far the most interesting and amusing book that has been published on this subject so far, and I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in spanking.²⁰⁵

I'm a very large and physically powerful man who's never managed to have a successful relationship, and never had anything even remotely like a Taken in Hand relationship—but I'm writing this because, thanks to some information I gleaned from this website, certain pieces of the puzzle that is my troubled psyche have recently clicked into place, and I'm having trouble sleeping because the need to share this with people of a like mind is overwhelming.

To understand what I'm talking about, you'll need to know some very, very personal things about me, and the darkness inside me that I've been battling with. To begin with this story is going to seem very off topic (about abuse rather than a healthy Taken in Hand relationship) but please, bear with me while I bear my soul.

My father was Hitler, Stalin and Atila the Hun all wrapped up in one sadistic 5' 10" frame. Probably still is, but I've not had contact with him in a long while. My mother was, and is, Mother Teresa times 1000. My father used to abuse my mother and my eldest sister regularly—on more than one occasion he tried to drown my eldest sister. It's only thanks to my mother that my sis is still alive.

Mum used to get between my father and my sister whenever she could, so that he would hit mum instead. I guess the love of an overwhelmingly good mother pushes her to do extraordinary things, because I remember a time when I was very young, sitting in a hospital next to what I thought was a corpse. I was about 4 years old, and naturally

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wanted my mum, so I went looking for her, obviously in something of a distressed state—calling out for my mum.

A nurse picked me up, told me not to be so stupid, and plonked me down next to the “corpse”, which I hadn’t noticed was still breathing, and told me that was my mum. My father had beaten her so badly, I couldn’t recognise my own mother.

This is something he did to her regularly for about 18 years. He would beat her several times a week, with varying levels of severity—and the police would do nothing about it because it was just a domestic disturbance, and back then it wasn’t something the police here in the UK got involved with unless someone died. Thankfully, while we were all still very young, she managed to escape with all of us, and although he did his best to make life difficult for Mum for the next decade or so, he never got to lay a finger on her again.

If you’re thinking that experiences like that could mess a person up for life, well you’d be right in the case of my eldest sister. In my case, I think I’m over the worst of it—or at least, I’m hoping so, with the new insights I have recently gained.

Anyway, back to the story...

When I was a young teen (not sure exactly how old, about 13 I think), a fairly attractive girl was at our house one day. She was slightly younger than me, and frankly, not that interesting to me. Being bored, and looking for something to do, we played various games, one of which was to see if we could do a Houdini and escape from being tied up (with an

old necktie, of all things). I quickly realised that being tied up was something I really hated, and was soon free—probably from the sheer adrenaline of the mild state of panic being so helpless put me in.

But then it was her turn. As soon as I tied her up, I found myself incredibly turned on by the exchange of power. I didn’t understand why I felt that way, or why it scared me so, and so I forgot about the whole thing. For a few years.

Then as I got older and more interested in the ladies, I found myself forming ideas about relationships that were, in hindsight, not my own. I thought that any woman in my life should be treated with the utmost veneration (a belief I still hold to, by the way) and that they should be my absolute equal in every way.

As I got older, I found myself having darker and darker thoughts in private. I abandoned the idea of women being equal in bed, but clung to the idea that a woman should be my equal outside of the bedroom—in fact, slowly coming to feel that maybe she should take the lead just a little when not in the bedroom. If Hollywood and the media teaches us anything, it’s that women are our equals, maybe even our betters—men are dogs, after all. As easy to turn on as a lightbulb.

So now I was feeling more and more that my perfect woman would be some sort of sex slave in the bedroom, but some kind of superwoman at all other times. Unsurprisingly I couldn’t find this woman no matter how hard I looked.

All the time, my private fantasies about women got steadily darker.

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Now, I knew from experience that any time I hurt someone, even when they deserved it, I would get so chewed up with guilt, remorse and anxiety that I would feel physically sick, yet I couldn't help but fantasise about bondage situations. These fantasies eventually started to include fantasies about rape. Before long I was dreaming about kidnapping and torturing innocent women.

And then one day, on a bus going to work in the city, I glanced at a fairly good looking woman, and images filled my head of her in a situation that, in all likelihood, she would rather have taken her own life than been in. And just for a split second, I liked them.

I started to think that unless I found someone with whom I could fulfil some of these fantasies, someone who would enjoy being treated that way, I was going to turn into a monster, just like my father. I started to think that this darkness inside of me was my nature, and that unless I could find a way of satiating it, something terrible was going to happen.

Now, I would think about it logically and I knew that I could never hurt anyone. Any time I even scare someone, something inside me is wounded, and I'm emotionally hurt. I'm the kind of person who is forever trying to make those around him comfortable, trying to fix everyone's problems, be the agony uncle—the nice guy, the funny guy, the gentleman. It's not in me to hurt anyone, and I knew this—so why were my dreams so dark?

Being an Internet savvy kind of guy, I decided to go online and find

someone to talk to who had tried dominating another person sexually, and maybe get some insight into that part of myself.

But I never did. I looked at various resources, saw pictures of people doing things to other people that would be considered abuse if it weren't for the fact that both people wanted it to happen, and were both enjoying the experience.

Then I stumbled across a dating website for those into the kind of dark things that were going through my head. The site was for dominant women and men, submissive women and men, and those who liked to try both. Somewhere in there it stated that there aren't that many dominant men in the "scene", and in fact that kind of person was somewhat in demand because submissive women abounded.

I couldn't help but be puzzled by that. It just didn't sound right at all. Surely there was an ample supply of men around the world who are more than willing to be strong and rough with a woman? Surely the caveman in us can't be that far gone?

Then I stumble across a website for women who like to be controlled by strong but caring men—women who want to be taken in hand. At first I thought it was just another site for sexually submissive women, but as I read an article about how men can be separated into 3 groups, alpha, beta and gamma—strong, "normal" and weak men—I began to see something. Society has told these men that they have to be nice, caring "new man" men—betas. It slowly dawns on me as I read other articles on the site that I'm an alpha, but

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society has told me so often that I should be a beta, I believed them. So I did my best to be a beta.

"The Gentle Giant" is how most people seem to think of me. People at job interviews think I'm arrogant. Nice, but arrogant. Now, arrogance is misplaced confidence—I have no misplaced confidence. I'm very very good at what I do for a living, and the point of a job interview is to get that across. I'm not arrogant; I'm just that good. And very confident—a sure sign of an alpha. And that sounds arrogant, which kinda makes this whole point like some sort of self-fulfilling prophecy...

So I realised, after all this time, thanks to this website, that it's ok to accept my need to be dominant. In fact, the more I think about it, the more natural it seems. It makes me think of gorillas. The alpha male takes the lead in the family, protects them, guides them, cares for them, guards them like a huge bodyguard. He won't eat unless the entire family is safe—he puts their welfare before his own, their needs before his own. He may be their leader, but in a very real way, he is their servant. He would die for his family in a heartbeat. He's the silverback.

With this it all becomes clear. The media, society, Hollywood and the very real need to be the opposite of my father led me to believe that I needed to treat a woman as my equal in every way, rather than as a beautiful and fragile being that isn't my equal—in many ways a woman is inferior to a man, but in just as many ways she's superior to him. It's ok to celebrate and exploit those

differences, those advantages, to offset each other's deficiencies.

I accept it. I'm an alpha male. I'm the silverback. It's my place to lead, protect and provide for, and in so doing, to serve in my own special way.

The same night I made that discovery, I found and read some fiction about the kidnapping of innocent women, and how they're forced into servitude as slaves known as Kajirae on a fictional anti-earth called Gor. Just the sort of thing that used to excite my dark side—only now it was a massive turn off. In fact, it angered me. I started feeling the need to fight these evil people and release these slavegirls. I had to remind myself that this was nothing more than fiction, and that just like I would never really hurt anyone, neither would the people who read or write this stuff.

I had to wonder, though, why it didn't excite me anymore—and this is the point of this somewhat long-winded posting:

I think the "alpha" me, the REAL me, was buried in the back of my psyche by the need to conform to a "beta" norm, to be the "nice guy" that the media and society as a whole told me I should be, and the need to be the opposite of my Father compelled me to be. I think the disturbing fantasies were some sort of reaction to that, and grew more and more intense over time as the "alpha" me struggled for a conscious release. Now that I've accepted that part of myself, I feel more at ease than I have done for years, and my "dark side" seems to have

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disappeared. I think it's work is done.

I've always been irresistibly drawn to vulnerable women. I never knew why—I always fought the urge to take a vulnerable woman, choosing very deliberately the more confident women instead—the alpha women. Now I know why I was (am) drawn to that kind of woman, and I can stop fighting it and accept that it's my place to find a vulnerable woman and make her invulnerable by being her Silverback.

Only took me 28 years and accidentally stumbling on this website to work all that out.

Anyhow, I know that's one hell of a way of introducing myself, but I'm fairly certain no one I know will understand any of that, and I needed to share it. I would really love to hear what you think, especially of my theory regarding the sudden disappearance of my "dark side"...²⁰⁶

"WHO CARES WHAT OTHERS THINK?" (26 DECEMBER 2005)

In response to Kali's post regarding unwanted attention from her neighbor's elderly relative, Louise mentioned she asked her husband how he would reply:

He went on to point out that in polite society that sort of behaviour is frowned upon.

This is an important comment. Society's manners have degraded to such disrespectful levels. Yet we have this tolerance that has been

adapted because it is politically incorrect to tell it like it is, lest you offend someone. Meanwhile, people are left to feel uncomfortable (as Kali was) and left to second guess if their feelings are acceptable or not.

This vein of thought can be stacked side to side with those of us who have not yet become fully comfortable with Taken In Hand relationships because the concept may be politically incorrect. By whose standards, though, and who cares about PC considering it hasn't made society overall any more polite?

I am new to Taken In Hand and moving in to the new year, I am going to adopt a clearer mindset to embrace it without question. It feels right to me, feels right for my mate; so who cares what society or the neighbors think? Who cares what the feminists have been saying for too many years? Who cares if it seems like an outdated, old-fashioned spin? If it works to make a relationship stronger and better, I choose it. And work it does.

I don't mind surrendering a more liberal, feminist mindset to my mate, if the return response promotes my greater well-being and security. In fact, I have been in previous relationships where I felt everything needed to be equal and ultimately that way of thinking brought conflict which brought long silences or big outbursts of emotion I do not want to endure again in my life. Not that I am willing to be a doormat and have no opinion.

Maybe I have learned that by following Taken In Hand, I can avoid being left to wander in emotional states of insecurity and confusion. In

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times of disagreement, there are no emotional responses that I can not handle or surprise me. I know what to anticipate. My mate respectfully guides me. We honor each other's intelligence, but ultimately I will defer to his decision rather than create an issue that will only bring emotional pain or we revisit it. I do not give up...rather I have learned that feeling happy does not always mean being the one in charge.

The parameters are not limitless which means we do not go in directions so far apart from each other that we can not return. By choosing how I react, becomes what I give to my relationship. Taken In Hand has taught me it is okay to express myself, to trust and be confident and feel safe. With these positive feelings, who cares about what others think?²⁰⁷

"GROWING UP" (27 DECEMBER 2005)

As a child I always knew I was different. Much like a gay man does not think about women, and would never be happy with one. I did not think about sex or relationships with women the way my peers did, and I knew I would not be happy in a standard relationship. At 9-10 years old I found Playboy and Penthouse to be educational, but not erotic to me. In my mind I saw something much different then what was the fuzzy all to perfect, yet boring poses they were selling. They were just naked, beautiful, but not a big turn-on compared to what I saw in my head, which was more a lifestyle than just naked women.

At 10-11 I used to take turns tying up a girlfriend in elementary school. We never had sex, but the feel of the power exchange was something I had always thought about. By 16 I was spanking girls in high school, and by my 20's I was going to The Vault and Paddles, some very cool SM clubs at the time. I played with friends and lived many lives, sharing and experimenting, I am now 39 as of 12 25 05...

One thing I learned on this trip was that although I enjoyed many aspects of BDSM, I got the most enjoyment out of being with one partner whom I trusted and who trusted me. I could go deeper and further, and the emotional element made it more then just a flogging or bondage.

As I grew I realized that I not only needed to be with one person who shared my passion for this type of play, but also I needed I deep trust and emotional commitment. I also realized that many in the lifestyle were not compatible for long-term or even short-term relationships.

I was raised to be a gentleman, to hold the door for a lady, and to carry her bags, to pay for her meal when I take her out. So when dating someone who had previously been trained to carry stuff for her master, or open the door for him... I felt very uncomfortable. I did not feel this was true to who I was. That is not to say I am completely traditional. I like to cook and I cook well. I even had one submissive woman argue with me about that, as she had been previously trained to open doors and cook and clean. That's not to say I don't like being cooked for—I love

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it—and I love having a woman take care of me, but I don't like being told that I shouldn't do these things for a woman. I love to take care of the women I am with, and to be taken care of as well.

I began to realize that as progressive as I am I liked the old-fashioned values that I grew up with, but with a twist. In the past these values where default and to defy them was wrong. Women could not even vote. That means men and women were stuck in these roles whether they liked it or not. Today we can choose to live this way and to make it fit our idea of what makes a happy household for us.

I still like to play many games with my lover; I have studied shibari and love bondage, living our fantasies like play rape and other games where the man is in control... but it goes beyond that. My relationship now requires a true understanding and willingness to take our places. It is no longer play.... I take my woman when I see fit. If she is cooking and cleaning and bending over and I decide that I want her then and there, there is nothing to argue about: she is mine and I take her. Of course, I don't suggest this with someone you don't know. She is allowed to struggle and protest, but she knows it will do no good, except to egg me on further, as it make me hot to she her struggle and try to have her way, even though we both know that when I win, we both win.

As far as how the household is run, we talk about it and there is not much discipline required to make it work, except for the occasional outburst. The woman I am with now

has a sharp tongue and needs to be put in her place. If I let her get away with speaking to me in a rude or condescending manor, it only escalates. I find it better to cut it off before it gets worse. Sometimes corner time or a spanking will do, but for serious offenses, I have a strap that puts the fear of god into her. She often thanks me afterward, although she may not be happy during her punishment.

I have only recently found the Taken in Hand site, and it has provided me with a wealth of information. I cannot say I agree with everything on this site, but for the first time I feel I have found people talking about living a BDSM type lifestyle in what I consider to be a much more mature way than some of the other more prevalent Ideas about D/s relationships.

When I was younger, I enjoyed leading my slave around in public with her collar on. We dressed in a manner that let the world know our business, and there is nothing wrong with this, but as I grow, and and have a career and not just a job, I don't want everyone to know my business. I had at one time a locking metal collar I made a my slave wear in public and I know people who wear theirs for years... one person I know has not taken hers off for 8 years. But that no longer works for me as we have real jobs and plan on a family.

I like being able to go out in public and without any collar or dressing in leather, yet still having the respect for each other and knowing our places, to the point that people may know we are different, but we don't

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have to make a statement about it. we just are and it feels very natural.

I hope to learn more about Taken in Hand as many of the ideas set forth on this site are close to my heart.

Thanks for reading,²⁰⁸

"MY FIRST TAKEN IN HAND EXPERIENCE" (30 DECEMBER 2005)

Cars. Unlike the stereotypical woman, I love them, so one would think that buying a new (used) car would be an exciting experience. Unfortunately, it's not. My husband and I have different ideas about what a good car should be. I want luxurious but practical; he wants sporty and fast. I prefer automatic; he prefers standard. Over the past several years, our car purchases resulted in compromise, anger, and resentment. Buying a car causes our worst arguments. In fact, both of us have uttered the D-word over a car.

Over the past seven years, I also have tried to introduce a male-led relationship into our lives, believing that it would lead to greater satisfaction for both of us. It didn't work well. Whenever I mentioned giving him authority, he got a "deer caught in the headlights" look. He jumped to the worst conclusions, always saying, "But I don't want to hurt you." My biggest blunder was when I once called him "Master" in bed. I felt stupid, and it killed the intimacy pretty quickly.

On the positive side, I saw moments of hope. I read *The Surrendered Wife*, and we tried to apply that to our lives. It lasted about a week be-

cause we fought over (you guessed it!) buying a car. However, during the time that we practiced it, we were both happier. During one particular row, he looked down at me and said firmly, "I'm getting angry, and I'm going to start yelling, so you had better stop." I stopped, and I melted.

Fast forward a few years to when I found Taken in Hand. I devoured every article on the website, and I felt a tremendous sense of relief. I didn't have to wear a collar or call him "Master". I didn't want his domination to be confined to the bedroom, but I also didn't want to adopt a drastically different lifestyle that would make us both uncomfortable. I reread the boss's article, "Effect positive change by acting as if...," several times, and something clicked. I vowed to act as if he was the head of the household, and see how it worked for us.

Last night, my husband called me from work and told me that he was planning on purchasing a car. I wasn't surprised. His car needed to have the engine rebuilt twice in a year, so I knew it was time to sell. His solution was to buy another car—his dream car—and sell the first one in the spring. The car that he picked was sporty and fast, and it had a standard transmission. He believed that we could afford the payments, and since my car was a good family car, we could get a sports car this time.

I could have fought him on it and won, but then we would be unhappy. The resentment and anger would last for days. Instead, I thought, "What would a Taken in Hand wife

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do?" I told him my objections, and then I said, "It's your decision. I trust you to make the right decision for us." He listened and said he understood my concerns. I felt like he heard me. When he came home with the car, I kissed him passionately and told him that I was happy that he got his dream car. There was no anger or resentment, and I am genuinely happy for him. Although I compromised what I wanted, I feel like I gained something greater: my husband's appreciation for my trust.²⁰⁹

"REASSURANCE FOR THOSE NEW TO ALL THIS" (5 JANUARY 2006)

I don't know about others but when I first began to read the Taken In Hand site and learning about the DD aspect that I desire ... I thought ... wait a minute. NO WAY can these men be perfect enough to do this so well. It kept me awake ... thinking how can I fully accept my hubby's control? He never wipes his feet, he is the first one to get angry and act like a big ol' baby, and he farts in public!

But after a while, I realized that Frank, and Stephen and Tev's Mike and Blush's Gary weren't perfect either. Everyone has their bozo button moments, everyone has bad days and even bad weeks.

But when you are in the beginning of this and everyone is unsure of the full scope of their roles, each one is anxiously awaiting the other's reaction of even the silliest of situations, only to find that neither of you react the way you think you want the

other to react. Some days it's a total train wreck.

When you are new to this, it's so hard to sit back and let it happen. It's easy to revert to old habits of being snitty about the wiping of the feet when it was on your list to mop the floor that day. It's hard when your two year old smashed pop tarts up to play with his monster trucks in. AND it's hard to understand why he doesn't react like he "should" to your breaking "rules".

As much as these forums and things help they also hurt. If you aren't careful they can give you a stylized idea about what your relationship should look like. As a sane person, you know that you have to develop your own likes, dislikes, and way of relating ... but the slimy green monster of insecurity can really rattle your sensibilities. I know I catch myself at times, thinking ...wait, this isn't how it's supposed to be.

Perhaps it is obvious that we all go through these times. But I really think folks new to this hold the "experts" to a higher standard that they / we strive for.²¹⁰

"A MAN LEADS WITH LOVE AND KINDNESS" (7 JANUARY 2006)

I am a man. A man thinks. A man makes decisions. A man leads. A man is active. A man initiates. A man pursues. A man wears the pants in his relationship. A man commands. A man is dominant. A man masters his woman. A man *takes* his woman.

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But the man also *gives* to the woman. He's the biggest *giver* in the relationship. He works his butt off to give his wife everything she needs and wants. A man is generous. He works hard to support and provide for his wife. He loves and cherishes her and makes sure she knows he cares. He's kind and considerate to her and puts her first. A man puts his wife and their relationship first to balance the power and control he has in the relationship. A man listens to his wife's feelings and wraps her in his strong arms both literally and metaphorically. He protects his wife from anything or anybody that would harm her. He would give his life for her.

My wife respects me and follows me because she knows that I have her best interests at heart. She trusts me to take us where we need to go. She defers to my decisions and accepts my leadership because she knows that I put her and our relationship first, before my own wants and needs. She is receptive and appreciative of my gifts. She has created a warm and inviting home for us and she fills it with sensuality and pleasure. She is feminine and responsive when I take her, and she never says no. She needs to be taken just as much as I need to take her. A primal physical coupling of bodies. A union of souls. A sacred bond.

It's been a long road to this point in time. When we first got married some 23 years ago my wife and I fought so much we nearly got divorced in the second year of our marriage. It was difficult to juggle marriage and kids but even before the first child was born our relation-

ship was stormy. I didn't get why my wife couldn't just accept my leadership and let me do what I was supposed to do, and she didn't see why she should accept my decisions. It took years to get to where we are now.

I think the turning point was when one of our kids had an accident and nearly died. When that incident happened I KNEW what to do and I took command more forcefully than I'd done in the years up to that point in time. I think my wife was stunned by the power of my determination and leadership. She did what I told her with no complaints or challenges. For the first time I saw my wife being meek and obedient and after that I knew I had to have her like that more of the time. It was like a switch had been flipped that turned on my power and her acceptance of my leadership in our marriage. After that I was probably more decisive, confident and commanding, which my wife responds well to, but more than that, I think she saw for the first time that I would be there for her and the kids, that I would always step up to the plate when the chips are down. She finally trusted me to be the man and protect her and the kids. She saw who is the man among us, and who is the woman, and she liked it.

If I had one piece of advice to give to men and women entering a marriage it would be this: men, don't just master her—put your wife first and let her know you love her. A woman needs to trust that you will treat her like a queen. Don't be selfish and too into yourself and your own needs, be considerate and ten-

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der with her or she'll lose her respect and her desire for you. Treat her like your queen and she'll treat you like a king. Women, respect your husband and accept his leadership. Don't try to wear the pants—your husband will fight like a dog to retain the masculine position, and either you'll lose the fight or you'll lose the relationship. Take care of your man's ego, and he'll take care of your feelings. Both, believe that together you can get through whatever problems you're having, and keep trying. Never give up!²¹¹

"OUR TYPE OF TAKEN IN HAND MARRIAGE" **(8 JANUARY 2006)**

We feel there are many paths that lead to a Taken In Hand marriage. When my husband and I started our path we walked a few of them before finding that there is no right or wrong, just different roads to take.

We read so many different approaches and belong to a group that has a strong focus on spanking. Since I was not opposed to spanking we decided to give it a try. The results were a disaster and left me feeling like there was something wrong with me. WHY don't I respond like everyone else? Why do I not feel all loved and mushy inside afterwards? Why do I feel like I want to hurt someone and am left angrier than I was before being spanked?

What this confusion led to was communication between my husband and me. It opened doors that were always closed. The spanking did not open them, the feelings that I

had due to the spanking opened them if that makes sense.

What we came to realize is that from the day I married my husband I was happily a Taken In Hand wife! Your husband doesn't need to spank to take you in hand, though if that is something that works and both are agreeable to then that is great.

I am in no way frowning on couples who spank for punishment or discipline reasons. If spanking helps achieve the goals that you both want, I think that is wonderful, but for me it just didn't work that way.

Here is a glimpse into my marriage.....

My husband and I have come so far and, believe it or not, to spank or not to spank has brought us even closer if that makes sense. I've said it before, neither hubby or myself was ever what would be called vanilla. He is and has always been a very in control, take control kind of man. The kind of man you can depend on to do what he says he will do and take care of all the ugly things I would rather ignore. He is very protective of those he loves and nothing or no one will ever hurt them. I have seen it with me and with my kids and he got my kids in marriage! He is my ideal strong man.

I am "submissive" to a point but really only totally submissive when we enter the bedroom where I believe a man should take the lead. It felt very natural when we got married to turn over certain things to him...the bills, the cars, the annoying phone calls, the driving, MY MOTHER (WEG). That was like a dream come true since before I had to handle every little thing and it

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drove me nuts. It was great to finally be able to be just the woman in a relationship instead of man/woman!

The kids and major decisions we handle together. If we can't come up with a decision that suits us both, we table it and go back to it another time. My hubby will never say, "Because I said so or because I am the man," cause that would only serve to make me more set on doing the opposite and cause friction instead of closeness. Doesn't mean we never butt heads—we do and it can get ugly, but when it goes too far, all he has to do is say, "Enough" and I know darn well to shut my mouth and most times I do..lol.

My husband is a man who has a very strong, no nonsense presence. He is romantic, tender and sweet. He is the most laidback even-keeled person I have ever met. When his temper goes off, it's not pretty, but it takes a lot to set him off. Unlike me, who is set off at the drop of a hat and explodes. From day one when we were living in different states, he could calm me down with his voice. I would be going off on the phone about something and he would sweetly say.... "Close your eyes and think of me holding you and calm down!" It worked each and every time and still does.

We have always enjoyed spanking in an erotic way. When we came across certain sites that talked about using it in a DD way it intrigued us. We discussed it and thought we would give it a try. I think we were both surprised. While my husband always said there were certain times he thought I needed nothing more than to be taken over his knee and

paddled and I agreed, it never worked out quite the way it does for other people. Sure it would shut me up at some point but that was really to get him to stop not because it was truly re-focusing my attention. I would get right back up and go right back into whatever mood I was in and most times it would be worse because now I was mad and had to find a way to make him just as miserable as he just made me!

This could have a lot to do with how I was raised and we talked about that a lot. I always used my father as an example. I love and respect my father more than any other man on this planet. My husband is the ONLY man that I feel that same way about. There was only one time in my life my father swatted me and it was well deserved and I never did that thing again. My mother on the other hand was the total opposite. We never knew when or why it was coming and it served absolutely no purpose other than to make her feel better and me lose respect for her and resent her. I never stopped doing anything because of being punished by my mother. Yet all my father had to say was "I am really disappointed" and my heart was broken and I made sure to go out of my way to never see that look on his face again.

That is how we look at our marriage. It's not like anyone else's. We are all different and have different needs and desires. I need and desire to be the wife of a strong man, a man I know I can not walk over like a doormat, a man that will let me go off on my tirades but stop them when he has had enough. A man

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that supports me in every way possible and never gets tired of telling me how wonderful I am, how sexy I am, how strong I am, how I can do things myself and he only wants to take the pressure off, not control every little thing in my life. He is my rock and I know I can turn to him with anything and he will be there to hold me, calm me and step in if I need and ask him to.

My husband needs and desires to be the man he was born to be. To be respected, loved and cared for by a wife that listens to what he has to say (though may not always obey), to be trusted to use his authority in positive ways and not abuse it.

My husband has decided that he will spank only for life threatening things and my horrible dark moods that can last for days and even weeks. Neither of us know how I would react to a spanking during my dark times. I honestly told him it could very well help because at that time I truly am totally out of control with my emotions and not thinking rationally. BUT, on the other hand a spanking when I get like that could go the opposite way and totally piss me off. He says he understands this and we won't know until it happens and if it has the opposite effect, he won't do it again. He says IF I feel I need a spanking for whatever reason he will be happy to provide but it has to come from me.

Does all this mean we don't live in a Taken In Hand marriage, that we don't have that connection that can come from this way of life? No, our connection is so strong, so powerful that for me, just like with my father, I want to please my husband be-

cause I want to see his smile, to see him happy because I love him with all my heart and soul and respect him and his authority, his God-given right to be a man and not take crap from me or anyone else. Sure, I love to push his buttons, I have the mouth of a sailor, a temper that fires off at the strangest times, but these are things he knew when he met me and says he would not want me any other way.

For me, knowing that he can and does turn my attitude or mood around with just his touch, his voice or the look on his face is mind-blowing. He has the powerful male dominance without lifting a finger... And I know he is fully capable of giving a spanking if he sees the need for it. Just knowing that makes me love him all the more, makes me feel connected and bonded to him in ways I've only dreamed of and makes me want to make darn sure I don't cross the few lines he has.

So I would say we have a very Taken In Hand marriage that may differ from other couples' but still the bottom line is the same. Love, respect, connection and security. My husband is very much head of the household, he is very much in control of things, he just chooses to use his authority in the ways that best suit us and work the best for us.²¹²

"MY FRIEND, MY LOVER, MY ROCK" (11 JANUARY 2006)

How would you describe your husband?

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This is how I describe mine, my friend, my lover, my rock. How do you describe yours?

He has every quality that makes for the best alpha man. He is kind, loving, and sweet and playful. He is strong, protective and takes no nonsense. I could see this all in him from the very first day.

I think being a good leader requires a lot more than just the ability to spank. Anyone can spank! It takes a real man to know when to and when not to. To know what works the best and what to toss in the dumpster and not be afraid to do it.

My husband knows me better than I know myself. He is not afraid to show his gentle side and that is the side that shows 99% of the time. He is not afraid to let me voice my opposition to something he says or does and is willing and open to discuss anything. Even when my views are totally the opposite of his.

If he wants or expects something and I just don't ever in this lifetime see it happening, I tell him and he is understanding and doesn't force the issue. He has the authority in our house but he doesn't use it in ways that will not suit us both or that will put unnecessary stress on me.

He leads with quiet authority. I mean, you know it's there but it's not shoved in your face. With my husband, his dominance is seen in everything he does in and out of the home. He could not hide it if he tried, it's all in the way he carries himself. He is respected at work by his employees not due to his overbearing presence but because of his quiet and gentle ways of dealing with people. He always wants to

know the 'whys' of mistakes and how next time a different approach can be taken and he will be the first one in line to help when you do find a new way to go about things.

This is how he leads at home and at work. The kids and I respond and respect him not because he points out what we did wrong and how we broke the rules, but because he shows us how to look inside of ourselves and figure out what the heck made us do what we did and how it effected everyone. To me, that is a lot harder than submitting to any punishment and really puts us on the road to not repeating past mistakes. Not because we are doing things to avoid a punishment but because we now know what triggered it, why we reacted like we did and how to respond next time.

My husband may take the lead, but he makes me responsible for myself. Not that he is not there every step of the way, gently guiding and encouraging, he is and that's one of the things I love the most about him. He is ready and willing to jump in and take the wheel if need be but he would much rather I figure it out myself and he has shown me how to do that time and time again.

Before I met him I never considered myself a strong woman. I always thought that I needed someone to do things for me or tell me what to do. He showed me just how strong I am and that I can do anything that I set my mind to. With his strong but gentle ways he opened doors inside of me that were closed for years. He brought out the strong, loving, special woman that he fell in love with for me to see and get to

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know. He showed me that it is ok to be afraid of things that you tucked down inside but it was not ok to not deal with them and slowly he is helping me release those demons once and for all.

He is not perfect and at times makes me madder than can be. He is very stubborn and watches the worst programs on TV, but who wants a perfect man?²¹³

"THREE FEMALE FILM CHARACTERS I ADMIRE" (14 JANUARY 2006)

Elle Woods

Ok, some may think I've got to be joking. But yes, I admire Elle Woods in *Legally Blonde 1* *Legally Blonde 1* and *Legally Blonde 2*. I admire her for her attitude, modern savvy, resourcefulness....and just imagine how boring life would be if all people were conservative-navy-pantsuit types! Not our Elle!

Elle operates effectively in a man's world without compromising one bit of her femininity. She's obviously brilliant and capable but it's her femininity that makes her character interesting, lovable and human. It's also her feminine attributes that win the day for her.

What I like most about Elle is that she is not ashamed of her femininity. She is secure as a woman. I guess my gripe is that many women today seem to think they need to become like men in order to be acceptable in the workplace, thus the grey, black or navy pant-suits and the unnatural lowering of the female voice register. Ughh! My singing teacher says women's voices today are lowered

on purpose, that it is not natural, but a learned behavior. I ask, what's wrong with being a woman? Why try to act, look and sound like a man? Why not embrace femininity unashamedly even in the work place? Since women have taken to dressing and acting like men I think western society has become so drab. Women, let's add a bit of color and charm to life Elle Woods style!

Emma Woodhouse

I admire Emma Woodhouse in *Emma* (1996) for her pertness, radiance and special brand of cleverness. Emma has almost impeccable social manners and refinement flawed only by a [na've] type of snobbishness we hope she will out-grow one day. Emma is witty and a clever conversationalist, is probably widely read and obviously well cultured. She demonstrates a determination that 'her way is the right way' and consequently 'falls into ditches' of her own creation. She demonstrates an independence of spirit all the while being very dependent without the self-knowledge. This makes her quite adorable (especially to Mr Knightly).

Despite her human foibles of stubbornness, love of admiration and praise and a tendency to control lesser characters, Emma remains very likable. She is a young character and I like to picture what she could be like as a thirty-something with more life experience on her side. However even with the growing wisdom of years, I hope Emma never attains complete perfection. I like to imagine that she has a life-long struggle with her faults of char-

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acter. Although these faults provide fodder for her enemies, they keep her life fresh and dramatic making her all the more loveable to her friends, family and husband.

Personally, I don't find Mr Knightly a bore (as long as he is being played by Jeremy Northam). Mr Knightly has a quiet type of masculine charisma and is definitely very alpha male.

Elena de la Vega

I understand *The Legend of Zorro* received many bad reviews, and yes, I had to close my eyes during most of the fighting scenes! However, here's my view of the character of Elena de la Vega.

It should be kept in mind that Elena depicts a woman acting during a time of crisis. Under normal circumstances I imagine her demure, thoroughly lady-like, the perfect hostess, mother and devoted wife. I also envisage she has a great sense of fun and could be devilishly cheeky at times. But we, the viewers become acquainted with Elena during a period of personal calamity. During this time her very feminine attributes of motherly protectiveness and the human trait of self-preservation come to the forefront.

Of her human foibles, Elena has a venomous tongue under stress, particularly when provoked by her husband whom she loves passionately. However despite her noxious words to Alejandro during her opening scenes, I cannot imagine Elena flying off the handle all the time—I believe it's the big issues that rile her. I doubt she is petty and complaining over small issues like

many fine ladies of the north-east. She is a frontier woman.

Although Elena is quite the lady, she's certainly no pushover and when the going gets rough she certainly gets going. Should her child be threatened, or when it comes to standing by her man or the values she cherishes, she becomes a female dynamo. Here Elena demonstrates feminine protectiveness for her family and a strong sense of self-preservation.

Elena has great moral courage and demonstrates a high level of fidelity to her husband through both the good and bad times. I think she possesses an enormous sense of dignity and self-respect which shines through in this film.

On the whole I find Elena de la Vega a thoroughly admirable heroine. Definitely a woman I'd imagine requires a strong alpha male and head of the household at her side (I thought Alejandro was weak, particularly in the latter department).

Is Elena a Taken in Hand type woman? I'd argue the affirmative although I understand this opinion could be controversial. Oh, and the other thing, the critics thought Elena showed too much cleavage. What's so wrong with cleavage? Elena would never be as petty as her critics!²¹⁴

"ENJOYING CONSENSUAL SEXUAL AGGRESSION" (15 JANUARY 2006)

A woman who trusts you will allow you to bring your full physical power into the sexual act. In such a safe environment she will fully sur-

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render and allow you to take her thoroughly, to the satisfaction of both parties.

I have a long-term relationship with a lovely woman. She is a doll physically, emotionally stable and an intellectual delight. Over the course of the first few months with her, I made it very clear, by action, that within the bedroom and within relationship behavior in social settings, I run the show. (With power comes responsibility—I am acutely sensitive to her needs and do my damndest to fulfill them.)

Like the little tiger she is she rebelled: no man had ever dared to dominate her. Well, there she was arguing with me, and I simply grabbed her hair, bent her head back and kissed her for as long as I wanted to. She tried to break the kiss very forcefully, but as I am a long-term bodybuilder she had no hope. In time she abandoned herself to the kiss and then poured herself into it. When I let her go her only comment was “Oh Good God”. I’ve never heard a word of feminist propaganda since.

At that point, I began escalating the sexual play into the ravishment arena. With each encounter I added a classic forceful element—pinned against a wall, hands held behind the back or above the head, kisses of my strength and choosing, etc until total ravishment was the order of the day. She loved it, the escalation underscored my self-control, built deep trust, and propelled the relationship forward in a deeply satisfying way. We are a couple years out now, and I routinely do anything I want to her whenever I want in any setting. She

recently asked me, to my surprise, if I was holding back. And I was. I am strong enough and big enough, that I could hurt her if I wasn’t careful. She then surprised me by saying she felt at this point that she could handle any level of sexual aggressiveness and to not hold back anything.

I didn’t and neither did she! She stepped up her own aggressiveness to match my own which delighted me to no end. The mutual pleasure is more than I can describe and deeply satisfying and very stimulating to the relationship. We couldn’t be in this spot but for the Taken In Hand style orientation and the acceptance of classical male/female roles.²¹⁵

“HOW ARE THINGS DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE TAKEN IN HAND?” (18 JANUARY 2006)

My husband has always been very bossy. In the past, however, he could get very aggressive when he tried to lay down the law about something. Sometimes he would get really angry and I could get quite frightened of him. Me being the way I am though, being frightened didn’t make me want to do what he wanted, it just drove me into a state of sullen defiance. If I did do what he wanted it didn’t make me feel good, I just felt I was doing it because I wanted to avoid being shouted at, which made me feel resentment towards him and made me despise myself.

Occasionally he would get it right, and be assertive with me in a way I found pleasurable. One thing he

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often used to tell me off about was reading in the car, which always makes me sick, "Don't read in the car," he would say to me if he saw me pick up a book, and he said it in a quiet, firm tone of voice that invariably made me put down the book immediately, and to feel pleasure, rather than resentment at being told what to do.

What discovering this site did for me was to grasp at the idea that it was possible to respond pleasurably to authority rather than negatively. Mostly I read stuff on here by women who were not obeying their husbands because of religious reasons or anything but because they liked it, and I was rather disconcerted to realise that I too would like it if my husband was the way the men they wrote about were. But I didn't really think he could be.

However, when I discussed with him the fact that it upset me terribly when he lost his temper with me, and suggested that if he kept it and spoke to me in a different kind of way about the things that bothered him, he seemed to grasp the sense of what I was saying with only minimal input on my part.

Housework (my lack of interest in it) has always been the main area of contention, but now I make a lot more effort with it than I used to, and he is pleased that I try harder. If he points out to me something that needs doing, or something that I haven't done that I should have or something, I just try to do what he wants without argument. He doesn't shout at me, he just uses that quiet firm tone which I find produces a calming effect on me.

One of the most surprising things is that I find he can override my fits of temper. If he's told me off about something and I get sulky or petulant (as I quite frequently do) or if I'm bad-tempered for another reason, PMT or something, he can just make me feel better again at will.

The first time I ever threw a temper tantrum with him after we started this I flounced upstairs to the bedroom, and he followed me up there. Instead of shouting at me or trying to be conciliatory, neither or which approach would work, he just told me that he wasn't standing for this behaviour and that we were going out to the workshop now (that's where he always used to spank me at our old house). "I don't want to; I'm not in the mood," I said sulkily. "I'm afraid you don't get any choice in the matter," he said calmly. "We're going out there now."

I looked at him in astonishment as I realised that he was perfectly right, I really didn't get any choice in the matter. All my defiance and sulkiness ebbed away instantly, and I got up and went out with him quite meekly, I no longer felt the slightest desire to resist him. He just brushed my sullenness aside as if it was of no importance, and it just wasn't there any more.

And he's continued to do this ever since. If I get in a bad mood, instead of letting my bad mood get to him and cause him to get in one too, he just looks at me with that stern but slightly amused expression and says something like "You're not having one of your moments, are you?" or "Don't get hormonal with me" (if it's that time of the month) or something

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similar. His refusal to take my moods seriously, or to let them affect him, means that I can't take them seriously either, and invariably find myself responding to him with a smile rather than a scowl, the temper just melts away. He doesn't even need to say anything, sometimes just a look will do it

I have found also that knowing that my husband will keep his temper, and that he really is interested in my feelings about things, has enabled me to talk to him more freely about things, so that I can discuss anything with him, which before I would have been inhibited about doing. I always tended to keep things to myself, but now if he knows something's bothering me (and he always does know) he says, "What's wrong? Tell me." and I just do. That firm but kindly tone disarms me every time. In turn, I try to really pay attention to what he wants, which I didn't always bother much with in the past, he used to get very frustrated because he felt I wasn't listening to him, whereas now I do try to pay attention to the things that are important to him.

He is a naturally assertive man and I think he does really enjoy being in charge, I don't feel it's something he's doing just to please me. I think that is important.²¹⁶

"LETTING MYSELF GO" (19 JANUARY 2006)

Someone on the Taken In Hand yahoo group said that she didn't think a woman should let herself go after marriage, and that

she owed it to herself and her family to keep herself looking lovely.

I found myself reflecting on this having a few days ago been looking at some old photos of myself on holiday in Ireland in 1987. I couldn't help noticing how much thinner I was then, and how much brighter my hair looked without any white in it. Have I let myself go? Well, I suppose so. I have never really made much of an effort with my appearance. I have never worn makeup, and gave up wearing perfume after I got married because my husband hates the smell of almost all perfumes. I've never "worked out" in my life. I've never gone in much for dressing up either: I mostly live in jeans and jumpers (i.e., sweaters) or t-shirts, depending on the weather.

Would my husband like me better if I were thinner and wore makeup and stuff? I don't know, but I don't think so. Any vague mention on my part of going on a diet usually causes him to go out and buy me something fattening. And he's never mentioned wanting me to wear makeup. He probably would prefer it if I wore sexier clothes, but so long as the underwear is okay he doesn't really mind what I've got on top, so long as he can get his hand inside it. And he's a lot fatter than he was twenty years ago too, and he has less hair, but I don't like him less, in fact I like him a lot more than I did then; I wouldn't swap him for the old thinner, hairier model at all.

Seeing my hair in those pictures freaked me out though. "Look at me!" I wailed at my husband. "My hair used to be red, and look at it now, it's practically white, I have old

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lady hair, I don't want old lady hair!" So I went out and bought some hair dye and now it is a rather more vivid shade of red than it ever was before. "Do you like it?" I asked him nervously. "Yes" he said, and I think he was speaking the truth, but next time I might try and find something closer to my natural shade. This is pure vanity though, it's not something he ever mentioned, and I don't think he really cares what colour my hair is.

Whether we have let ourselves go, or whether time is simply letting us go, we are definitely happier now with each other than we were in our youth, so maybe letting go isn't such a bad thing.²¹⁷

"WHAT IF YOUR WIFE FEELS SCARED AND VULNERABLE?" (19 JANUARY 2006)

What is a man to do if his wife is very willing to try a Taken In Hand relationship (not just going along with it out of fear of losing the man!), but perhaps because of her past relationship history she feels very scared, vulnerable and stressed about giving up control, and perhaps is devastated when her husband threatens to spank her?

The woman's fears need to be calmed, her stress soothed, and her insecurity eliminated. She needs to know that her man loves her and *accepts* her as she is. She needs to know that her man cares about her wishes and that he will put her first in their relationship. She also needs to be reassured that being taken in hand will not mean being silenced or being turned into a serv-

ant. She needs to know that the power will not corrupt her man.

If you are a man in this situation, first, always to keep in mind that you could be mistaken, and ensure that she knows that you know this. This will calm any fear she might have that you might become overbearing and intolerant of dissent. N.B., contrary to what you might think, keeping in mind that you are a human being and thus fallible *will not* diminish your strength, control or leadership qualities in your wife's eyes. On the contrary, it will do the opposite.

Secondly, show *through your actions* that you put her first and care about her happiness. It is no good just telling her that you care about her happiness: actions speak louder than words. *Show* her that you put her first. Think about what would help your particular wife feel sure that you are not turning into a scary self-serving narcissist, and take action accordingly, on an on-going basis.

Thirdly, make sure that she *feels heard* when she expresses her fears or any other doubt or problem: listen to her actively and don't respond defensively. Responding defensively makes the other person feel invalidated, invisible, infuriated and in this kind of relationship it is likely to make the woman fear you will dismiss any concerns she may express and ride roughshod over her wishes.

Fourthly, seek her opinions and check her wishes on an on-going basis. It is highly likely that she will be fearing being denied a voice in your relationship. Think about what you can do and say that would as-

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suage your wife's fears in that respect, and keep this in mind on an on-going basis.

Fifth, go as slowly as is necessary. That may be slower than you think. Ask her if you aren't sure. Some people like to schedule a regular conversation in which general issues and concerns can be raised. Others don't want to have such conversations, but either way, you need to find a way to be reasonably sure that you are not taking things to fast for her.

Sixth, at least until everything is going smoothly, concentrate on *enjoyable* interactions. If your wife reacts badly to punishment spanking or the serious threat of spanking, don't even think about spanking her when you are angry. Until you have a control dynamic that positively excites and delights her, it will be abusive and destructive to spank her as punishment. Don't do it! It will put her off being controlled; it won't help in any way.

Seventh, in all your interactions with her *see her as well-intentioned* and eager to please you, and *ensure that she knows you do not doubt her good intentions* or her desire to please you. Avoid like the plague any words or actions that suggest that she is not well-intentioned. That can wound very deeply.

Eighth, strive to remain calm and in control of yourself so that your wife doesn't fear that you will become violently abusive. On the other hand, don't let that calm control become callousness or anything that might seem like callousness to your wife. Appearing icily calm or blasé when your wife is extremely emo-

tional may feel like callousness to her unless you are careful to help her feel heard and understood.

Ninth, apologise clearly, directly, and non-defensively when you make a mistake.

Tenth, when you want her to change some aspect of her behaviour, tell her clearly and specifically what to do (or not do). It is no good expecting her to obey an order expressed in an unclear, non-specific way.

Finally, try to keep your sense of humour. Laughing together really can help. In particular, make jokes at your own expense to help ensure that she does not fear that you will become a pompous arrogant ass too full of himself to be an enjoyable husband any more.

What else? More advice, anyone? There is so much more to say!²¹⁸

"THE FUTURE OF MEN, BY MARIAN SALZMAN, IRA MATATHIA AND ANN O'REILLY: A BOOK REVIEW" (22 JANUARY 2006)

Having previously written books called *Next* and *Buzz*, Marian Salzman and her colleagues call themselves "international trendspotters and advertising world superstars". *The Future of Men*, according to Salzman's website, "leverages the success that Salzman and her colleagues had in 2003, when they popularized the concept of metro-sexuality". Well, it is a breezy look at men over the last few decades; but it's also an infuriating and ultimately fairly tiresome book, and not just

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because the authors use the word “societal” a lot. The truth is, it doesn’t offer any real insight.

The authors observe men’s behaviour and quote what a range of journalists and ordinary people say about them, in books, in the media and in interviews, but just reporting these things without going deeper can simply lead to confusion. They’re happy enough, for instance, to let us know that

Where once, ideologues and professionals tried to persuade us that there was no essential difference between male and female the last few years have seen the resurgence of certain biological “truths” and the reemergence of the idea that gender difference are innate not learned

But this idea goes nowhere. They fail to think through whether this trend has any social consequences, let alone to what extent it might be *true*. The inverted commas around “truths” perhaps explain why: these authors are so concerned with media and marketing that, deep down, they believe those forces “culturally construct” masculinity:

...what we would consider “macho” behaviors aren’t necessarily in synch with definitions of masculinity in other societies. In reality, the Western version of masculinity is fairly modern and geographically limited

Nonetheless, they’re happy elsewhere in the book to “explain” the phenomenon of the toy-boy in a one-liner about changing evolutionary pressures.

But enough about its lack of intellectual rigour. The fundamental idea behind the book is that as the “image” of man has changed over the last fifty years, man himself has changed, too. In that sense, the book is less about the future of men than about their present and past, and it’s the book’s treatment of the past that I find most annoying actually. I think Salzman and her colleagues stereotype the past, constantly talking in broad-brush terms that make it sound as though every marriage in the mythical “1950s” was a Taken in Hand style one—they’re happy for instance to quote, uncritically, the British writer Paul Fraser:

In 1950, a real man was the [breadwinner] He was loved and feared by his wife. She wouldn’t talk back

It seems to me what’s happening here is over-generalisation and wishful thinking, as Fraser and the authors enjoy drawing a sharp contrast between then and now. My own view, as a man who very much wants a wife to love and fear me, is that my and her active desires for this (hey, where is she by the way?) are thoroughly modern, postfeminist desires. The 1950s are a great fantasy for us, a cultural reference (and I love a vintage suit more than most guys who don’t love guys) but I suspect many men and women were trapped in unfulfilling marriages then, as now, and were much less able to express their need for security and control than we can now. It’s the sheer selectivity that bugs me about this book’s take on history. “Once upon a time,” it tells us,

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"leading men in American movies came with an imposing physique and a square jaw: John Wayne, Humphrey Bogart, Robert Mitchum, Lee [Marvin.] Nowadays, for every Russell Crowe there is a baby-faced, effeminate Tobey Maguire!"

It makes a neat contrast, but hang on! Have Salzman and her friends never heard of Cary Grant? Of Montgomery Clift? Of Dirk Bogarde? Again, we're offered an airbrushed, fake monochrome past—the kind of past imagined by people who probably think everything that appears new, really is.

As women have become more independent, the authors argue, they have gained control of masculinity. They now define it, approve it or criticise it, with increasing help from gay men, and straight men have adapted to this change by becoming more "female-friendly", which means they try to talk about their feelings, to dress nicely, and to do grooming. Hence the metrosexual fad of a few years ago, which as I've said Salzman claims credit for spotting (and naturally, the book mentions England soccer captain David Beckham a lot—he really does seem to be global metrosexual number 1).

The one thing that's interesting for us here is the next step in the argument: Salzman and her colleagues say there's now a backlash against all this. At a number of points, women are quoted complaining about a certain kind of narcissistic man who spends more time on grooming than she does, or has more expensive shoes. In fact, the book has a clearly ambivalent attitude to the poor old metrosexual:

Salzman clearly doesn't know whether her Frankenstein's monster fills her with pity or horror. At times he seems idealised as a modern, sensitive guy (Metrosexuals—duntcha just love "em?), at others, an embarrassing blip that real men have moved on from by now (Metrosexuals—arentcha sick of "em?). It's doublethink worthy of the *Private Eye* fake columnist Glenda Slag, whom British readers may know.

Women aren't being made happy by men who are vulnerable and needy, we learn, and both men and women are looking for something else. One Dutch woman is quoted speaking in very Taken in Hand terms: she likes her man to be the main decision-maker and head of the household, to be in control—because all this makes her feel like a woman. The authors mention *The Surrendered Wife*, of course, as one expression of this backlash, and make a point of saying that surrendering responsibility to her partner can be liberating for a woman. So maybe the tide of trend is with us!

Where the book gets really a bit silly is in its invention of *homo postmetrossexualis*. Salzman and Co. think there's a new type of manly man: what he's got is called "M-ness", and he's called the überse-xual.

This is a man whose defining qualities are passion and [style,] these men are the most [attractive,] most dynamic, and most compelling men of their generations. They are supremely confident! masculine, [stylish] Like the metrosexual, the übersexual enjoys shopping, but his approach is more [focused,] They are men like

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[George Clooney,] [They,] do not go out of their way to get women's acceptance or approval (though they almost always get it).

So Clooney's your man (which makes me quite smug to have once been called "the thinking woman's George Clooney"—by a gay man, I'm afraid). There's still a fair amount of ambiguity about this character, though: the übersexual also has to be touchy-feely:

We're talking about men being able to have open and loving platonic friendships with their male buddies. We're talking about men not being ashamed to admit they like the feel of cashmereâ€¦

I love that last bit; I think men really will be in crisis if they start bonding with each other over knitwear materials. But the authors soon get back on track, conjuring up the image of the oh-so-sexy übersexual.

Being a Real Man today means knowing and doing what it takes to get what you want, when and how you want it.

With a possibly endearing lack of irony, the authors seem to have forgotten that they've already, nearly two hundred pages earlier, quoted Paul Fraser's cutting critique of exactly this kind of fantasy:

In 2005, a real man has a six-pack [stomach,] he is successful. He is single, with a succession of model girlfriends. He is George Clooney. He is a media invention.²¹⁹

"MEN SERVE AND LEAD, WOMEN RECEIVE AND OBEY" (25 JANUARY 2006)

OBEYING AND SERVING

Some time ago I had a dream in which I was a waitress. To my surprise it was one of the most intense dreams I ever had and still has not left me. Though there was nothing overtly sexual about the dream or my attire or actions, this "waitressing" thing, this *serving*, made me feel like I was being prostituted and brought a feeling of deep nausea to my stomach. I'd found myself getting the same feeling when I came across BDSM type sites where the woman was expected to put her partner's needs and feelings first and hers on a back burner. And the same nausea again when I explored many Christian sites that advocated the woman either being a super woman type at home (basically a full time servant and maid for her family), or even worse, husbands who force their wives to become a vulnerable servant outside the home and work for a stranger. Where the bleep is the providence and protection in that? But at the same time as these things feel wrong to me, the feeling of obeying one's partner in relationship feels extremely right to me, and in many regards I am deeply drawn to traditional relationships. Seemed like quite a contradiction and I felt rather lost.

Then I noticed that in the traditional Christian wedding vows, a woman does not promise to serve, she promises to love, honor and *obey*. The word "obey" does not mean "serve", and that is the key.

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What's more, if you want to find serving, the place to look is actually in the man's traditional promise, to love, honor and *cherish*. Cherishing is serving. And yet this has been neatly glossed over for a very long time.

When I look back at my own life, my girlhood was always full of images of fairy tales and ravishment and rescue, and my adult heart has stubbornly refused to make the mistake of so called "growing up" about these things. I know I'm not alone here. In my little girl heart, and later, in my not so little girl heart, I wasn't riding off into the sunset on my own horse next to him as an "equal", I was on *hishorse*, with him in charge of the reins, being held close to him. I was obeying. And he was serving.

This really does seem to cut to the core of things, but what is the difference truly between serving and obeying? It was Patricia Allen's ideas (see "Getting To 'I Do', by Patricia Allen: a book review," "Respect and responsibility" and "An alpha female bares her throat only to her mate") that helped me articulate this distinction. In tune with traditional wisdom (and even biology if one looks at the act of intimacy), she stresses that feminine energy is receiving-based, receptive. That is definitely a more vulnerable way to be, and also more inward-focused, and being receptive to one's own sensations and feelings and comfort level is critical for female energy. The result of this as Pat Allen puts it is a woman must "love herself more", rather than overall putting another's feelings first and losing her

center. And many things unfold from these realizations.

RECEPTIVE AND ACTIVE

According to Pat Allen, a woman centered in her feminine energy does not give to someone else in an initiatory way (that would be serving), but rather she gives *back*, which is receptive-based. It is receiving and then naturally wanting to give back as a result. In giving back she is still being responsive to self-comfort cues and feelings rather than losing her female center through self-sacrifice. A feminine-energy woman also naturally gives back a little less than she has received, because that allows her to remain in her naturally receptive mode. On the other hand, when a woman is giving the same or more overall, then she is no longer being receptive, no longer being in her feminine center, and this is going against her very nature and so quite harmful. As I experienced so strongly in that dream for example, a woman serving feels deep down like a burnt-out waitress, used, taken from, as though she is being prostituted.

So while serving is harmful to female energy, *obeying* on the other hand is very suited as I see it, yet most people mistakenly see serving and obeying as somehow one in the same. The problem I have realized is that we have misunderstood what true obeying really is. To go back to the waitress example, on the surface it looks like a waitress is simply obeying, but true obeying is not about "taking orders" like that, it is a much more profound thing. Obedience does not happen in an imper-

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sonal vacuum, it is a *response*. It happens in context, as a response of respect and trust when one is being cared for and cherished.

What obedience really is is a natural response to being cherished. A “waitress” like I was seeing in that dream is, instead, a woman serving, and since a woman is not wired for the active imparting focus of serving, it is harmful. And the women I hear about from every direction who are not truly provided for and protected are likewise harmed: their obedience is not the response to being cherished as it should be but rather they are being used. So in both of these cases what looks like obedience there is really a kind of psychic rape, a siphoning, a burning out. No wonder it can feel like being prostituted when a woman is serving.

The only time serving is something else altogether and not prostituting a woman is when it is in the context of her obedience—she is cherished and given to, her feelings and comfort are thus given priority, thus she naturally *desires* deep down to obey and please back, it can become even an ache to do so, and so serving can happen as a part of this desire to make the one we are obeying happy. In this case it is part of the deeper desire now and so part of receptivity, and this desire is born of having been so cherished. This is *not* the same thing as a woman simply serving in itself.

HEROES AND HEROINES

However, serving in itself is very suited to male energy. Like true obedience is for a woman the deeper

receptive desire, so is true service for a man the deeper active desire. And unlike obeying, we do seem to have more of an accurate idea in general of what serving in itself means—it is initiatory, active, giving, imparting, impacting, and accommodating to the feelings of others—all core male energy stuff according to Pat Allen, and also in line with traditional wisdom. Choosing to lead and serve, and promising this to his chosen partner come what may, is something male energy is truly suited for, and in the end this is what fulfills a masculine-energy man. And serving the one you love is what cherishing is all about.

Pat Allen says that a boy becomes a man by realizing that women children and the earth and her creatures are not there to serve him but rather he them through the imparting of his manful bounty. He becomes a man by ending his focus on his own immediate self-gratification and committing himself to the active imparting of the male gifts he has to give, which in the end actually brings him the deeper gratification he seeks when those gifts of his truly help heal and protect those around him. Pat Allen uses the Fisher King wound spoken of in the heroic Arthurian legends (or rather the healing of this) to illustrate this.

A girl on the other hand becomes a woman when her self-love deepens enough to where she follows her intuition and feelings and sense of comfort, helping her deepen her own receptivity. Allen speaks of the heroine in the Princess and the Pea (happens to be my childhood favorite, smiles) to illustrate this. And it is

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this deepened self-comfort and feeling focus and receptivity that allows a woman to even recognize the man whose leadership she can trust and whom she can promise to obey with grace and gratitude. Obedience becomes her deeper desire, it is a very naturally feminine response to being cherished.

SLAYING THE DRAGON OF JUDGEMENT

What most people don't realize is this self-comfort focus of feminine energy is completely critical to developing and accessing her "woman's intuition" as well, and her receptiveness in all other areas. It is her opening to her own inner signals and needs and cues and heeding them that underlies both her deep intuition developing, her needing her comfort level overall maintained, and her deepening in other ways of receptivity. They are a package deal. Yet what we seem to expect nowadays is that a woman be intuitive and receptive in ways that benefit others but not focus on being receptive to the priority of her own inner comfort. We want her to benefit others with her feminine receptivity yet at the same time force herself to be the male energy and serve. And it simply doesn't work that way, without this self-comfort focus female energy atrophies.

But instead of embracing these basics of female energy, we wrongly judge them selfish and immature. I was following a discussion about Pat Allen's ideas in which a couple actually practicing her system received the following charged response:

"...you don't, as far as I can make out, inhabit the normal world at all. Your lives are so far removed from anything that I recognise as reality that I can't imagine what planet you come from. Certainly not Earth."

What particularly annoyed the critics was, you guessed it, the husband's insistence that it is *his* responsibility as the masculine-energy man in the relationship to lead – but also to *serve*. His wife is the complementing feminine energy so he takes the view that she should not work outside *or* inside the home, including housekeeping and the like, unless she desires to. He knows that for her to stay in her feminine energy she must maintain a true comfort level there and only give what she truly desires to give, plus it is the nature of a masculine energy man to prioritize the happiness of the one he is cherishing.

The criticism that this couple was living in a fairy tale rather than in the real world really struck a nerve in me. Making life a fairy tale is actually our only hope. The heroes of our deeper fairy tales served. They labored, and they fought the dragon, and they rescued the princess. Nowadays we attack the women who naturally are geared to be that princess (heroine), and we try to turn them into a similarly serving hero, much to our harm. As Pat Allen puts it, cherishing/serving is masculine energy, not feminine energy. Likewise, I'd still argue, obeying is feminine energy not masculine energy.

In the end, the loving giving of serving is what creates heroes and fulfills masculine-energy men. Serv-

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ing of this same sort done by feminine energy has the opposite effect: it is soul killing. A man anchored in his masculine energy is not looking for a woman to serve him. He is looking for a woman anchored in her feminine energy, one whom he can lovingly give to and one who can gratefully and gracefully receive this bountiful giving of his. She can then give *back* from a place of deeper desire (i.e., desired in the long run, if not necessarily always in the short run), giving back from a place of being cherished, and thus still true to her female receptive core. This receptivity of hers also includes her receiving his leadership and direction (i.e., her obedience). The healing irony of polarity is that the very act of his fulfilling her is what deep down ends up fulfilling him.

THE SERVANT LEADER

Giving/serving/cherishing is also what the Christian concept of headship is about, where a man is aptly encouraged to be a servant-leader. Headship calls for the man to lead, provide, protect and serve, and the cherished woman to receive and obey. It also ties in with the “curses” Adam and Eve were given in Genesis. Adam was given the work/serving curse, not Eve. Eve’s curse was to be ruled by Adam and to receive his seed and bear his children, even when these things involve pain (well, plenty of articles on this site on that topic!). This may seem to contradict the focus on self-comfort but it does not, as these things are not stand-alone but intricately connected with the *deeper* desire of being cherished. It is as ironic, and

profound, as how a boy becoming a man gives up his focus on his own self gratification only to find it leads him to the deeper gratification he truly wants through serving.

I have long felt in my gut that those “curses” actually held the healing that Adam and Eve (and we, their children) need, as a loving God does not punish to harm but to heal. They also seem designed to work only *together*. Eve is *receptive*, so her obedience must be inspired by Adam’s *cherishing* leadership, which makes it possible for her trust him. Her obeying without his cherishing would not be healing, but the two together are another story—a healing story, a potential fairy tale.

RETURN OF THE FAIRY TALE

The image of the couple on horseback remains etched in my mind, ancient, archetypal, and I know I’m not alone in this. He has the reins, is leading and serving. And she is held by him and opening to him, trusting and obeying. And it is through his cherishing and her obedience that they both know they are truly loved.

Something to think about when one hears the groom promise to love, honor and cherish—and something to cringe about when one hears a woman saying the same thing as the groom rather than promising to love, honor and obey. Because the modern woman is no longer cherished; rather, she promises to be a cherisher. And God forbid she should want to obey, or worse yet expect her groom to be provident, protective and trustworthy enough to be obeyed. Instead this precious treasure has been sto-

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len from us both. Deep down many of us long to be with someone worthy of our obedience—and deep down many men long to be that man. We do not want to harm our self and our partner by pretending to be a man by cherishing and serving, we want to embrace our receptive feminine energy and trust and obey.

If this is “not living in the real world” please give me the fairy tales any day, they feel to hold far more wisdom. At least fairy tales understand the difference between cherishing and obeying, and who is suited for which. No wonder we see tragic endings all around us in the “real world” and yet fairy tales end...²²⁰

“WHEN YOU’VE SEEN A HAPPY MARRIAGE WITH YOUR OWN EYES...” (8 FEBRUARY 2006)

I used to love going to stay with my grandparents as a child. Their home had a deeply-relaxing atmosphere of peacefulness. My grandmother's name should have been “Joy”, because that, in one word, expresses her personality: joyfulness shone out of her and warmed everyone with her vibrant blissful love. The sound of her exclamations of delight and laughter filled the house and wrapped itself around us all, soothing children's upsets and relaxing adult frowns. A few minutes with my grandmother could make even the most obstreperous child or the most truculent teenager beam with happiness.

My grandmother loved being a woman and she loved by my grandfather's wife. She proudly called herself “Mrs [my grandfather's first name] [my grandfather's surname]” and did everything she could to make my grandfather's home his castle, his haven from the world of his work, and his palace. Nothing was too much trouble for her. She warmed my grandfather's clothes for him by hanging them near the fire on cold winter mornings. (They had no central heating in their house.) She would get up early to bring him a cup of tea in bed on the mornings on which he had to go to work, then she would cook him breakfast and present it to him on a silver tray with a clean linen tray cloth and a fresh little flower arrangement that she picked every morning in the garden. He would read the newspaper and eat his breakfast alone, preparing for his day at work in the peace of the early morning, before anyone else was up, while my grandmother hummed happily to herself in her kitchen, making the mountains of breakfast necessary for everyone else in the house. I used to creep downstairs early, just to watch my grandmother prepare my grandfather's breakfast, just to hear her little laughs of delight, just to be near this so special and so serene and happy woman in her kitchen, seeing her doing what she loved: serving her family joyfully.

My grandmother's kitchen dated back to an earlier age before the dawn of modern conveniences. It had a huge dark wood dresser that took up a large part of one wall, an

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old-fashioned pantry cupboard that kept things cool in the days before refrigerators, a range cooker with a fire in it, and an enormous white sink that was big enough for several children to bathe in. On one side of the sink was a wooden draining board. She had no electric whisk or dishwasher or washing machine. Everything was done by hand. And yet, when she would come and announce that (afternoon) tea was ready, we would gasp as we entered the room, at the sight of the vast dining table filled with mouth-watering cakes and pastries, stunning little sandwiches cut and arranged artfully among the candles that adorned the table in that dark dining room. She always set the table with a beautiful crisp white linen tablecloth, translucent dainty bone china cups and plates, and freshly-polished silver cutlery. And always, there were dainty little flower arrangements that added the finishing touch to the table. My grandfather always sat at the head of the table, and smiled and graciously thanked my grandmother for the beautiful spread, expressing pleasure that my grandmother had managed to find some [whatever kind of flowers they were] for the table.

My grandfather loved to provide my grandmother with flowers and spent a lot of his spare time in his garden growing beautiful flowers for her. I remember lying on the grass in the gentle sunshine listening to my grandfather talk as he planted more flowers, and when I visited again later, seeing the glorious array of colour that his work had produced. My grandmother would pick

flowers and put fresh flowers in every room almost every day. Even in the winter, there were flowers available to bring beauty into their home. My grandfather made sure of that.

My grandfather was an old-fashioned honourable and kind-hearted English gentleman with a strict sense of morality and the sharpest, most intelligent eyes I have ever seen. He worked hard in his very intellectually-challenging work, and he brought to my grandparents' house an intellectual atmosphere and quiet mastery. He was a little scary because he was so intimidatingly clever and he seemed to take it for granted that all his children and grandchildren were as clever as he.

I remember spending hours sitting around the open fire, my mind fully focused, and concentrating hard on whatever discussion I was having with my grandfather, trying to keep up with his brilliant mind. He would speak softly and deliberately, and never raise his voice or be disrespectful, and his blue eyes pierced me as he waited patiently for me to form my argument and haltingly and childishly express it to him. His deeply respectful manners were not limited to his interactions with adults. He had the same courtesy and respect for everyone, from the most intelligent adult to the youngest child. But his softest, most gentle tenderness was reserved for my grandmother. He clearly loved her so deeply it moves me to tears to remember how dear to him she seemed.

My grandfather was the master of his house. He was the king of his

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castle. He was the man. He was in charge. He wore the trousers. He made the big decisions.

It is not that he did not consult my grandmother before making a decision. He certainly did. My grandmother's happiness meant as much to him as his meant to my grandmother. He considered my grandmother and his family carefully and undoubtedly sometimes sacrificed his own wishes in favour of his family's happiness. He listened carefully to anyone who had something to say, and his control never felt oppressive or overbearing. He had been through the horrors of the second world war, yet had managed not to lose his humanity. He had commanded men, but did not belittle orders at his family. Instead, his leadership in his home was quiet and respectful, loving and kind. I can see why my grandmother loved him so.

My grandparents quite simply adored and worshipped one another, and went out of their way to give one another joy. Their relationship was such that I have never lost hope that a truly happy marriage is possible. I have seen it with my own eyes, over a period of many years. I saw how tightly my grandparents clasped one another's hands and how they looked at each other with adoration and love just weeks before my grandfather died. I saw how happy my grandmother was with my grandfather, and how, after his death, although she was the same sunny person, she never exuded the quite same exuberant joie de vivre again.

I have always longed for a relationship like my grandparents had. A relationship in which my husband leads, protects and cherishes, and I make myself available for him, and joyfully receive and follow him wherever he takes us. I have always longed to belong to a kind and loving man completely, to be his, to obey and submit to him, the man, the head of his household, my lord and master, for ever.

I have not given up hope. One day...²²¹

"BONDED BY RAPE" (15 FEBRUARY 2006)

One account of the pre-historic mating customs of humanity has it that a bride was acquired by a strong warrior and his "best man" by kidnapping a favored female from a neighboring tribe and carrying her off to be deflowered/raped as soon as refuge from pursuing kinfolk was reached.

And this strong and responsive female then resisted with the strength of her limbs and the obstruction to weakness formed by her hymen, but was ultimately overpowered, penetrated, and bonded despite all her efforts. Her rapist was transformed by chemistry into her beloved husband despite and because of his violent taking of her.

The romance novel as pre-history.²²²

"FROM CLUES TO A WONDERFUL REALITY" (20 FEBRUARY 2006)

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We have not always had this relationship. We began our relationship with a small seed of awareness of my wife's need for a man who would not tolerate her behavior when she acted inappropriately. However, this awareness was confused and cloudy, due to our lack of full self-understanding. My dominant instincts were blunted because I thought I needed to be "nice" and "constructive" at all times; I assumed that if I was patient, supportive, logical and communicative, this would eventually persuade my wife to leave her tantrums, false accusations, anger and sarcasm behind. My wife, on the other hand, was in reality (which will be obvious to many Taken in Hand readers) simply trying to find her limits, and subconsciously wanting me to set her straight.

As I mentioned, we did have some early clues. My wife was aware that she had absolutely no respect for her ex-husband, because he simply let her do whatever she wanted. She realized that she was attracted to "take charge" guys. It was obvious from the beginning of our physical relationship that we both *greatly* enjoyed dominant physical scenarios, starting from classic "pinned against the wall" kisses up to and including acting out bondage and rape scenarios. I had a dim awareness that occasionally women would, in small but unmistakable ways, respond submissively to me with a desire for my leadership.

Like many others on this site, pursuing the clues in our sex life, we first experimented with some BDSM. While that was enjoyable, and some-

times still is, it clearly didn't explain those moments of lucidity when we both were reminded that my wife really needed me to be in charge in real life. Conversely, while I read up on some of the literature and websites about the nature of being "submissive", it was obvious that my wife did not fit my understanding of this term.

Over the last three or four years, we kept working on this, in the background of our daily life. I came to understand these things:

1. My wife cannot stand weak men.
2. She is bright, resourceful, and when she is not emotionally "off-balance", really well organized.
3. She has stretches of nasty behavior that are *not* corrected through my patience with her.
4. I am much better able than my wife to remain calm while under tension, and able to make decisions based on fairness, patience, and kindness, rather than fear, insecurity and vengefulness.
5. She is not interested in explicit acts of servitude, in real life or even just for sexual play. Instead, she fantasizes about and wants in real life to be forced into rough, dominant sex much of the time, having control taken from her. I, in turn, enjoy this just as much as she does, and find it utterly natural and comfortable. Yet, each episode is followed by tender closeness.
6. I had seen my patience stretched thin at times, and observed that in the few cases where I had firmly put my foot down, my wife's behavior actually im-

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proved (though she was careful not to admit the reason).

I was puzzled. Is she submissive, or not? Should I demand she act in a submissive manner, because I know there is some aspect of this in her nature, and that I am better equipped to decide a course of action during times of difficulty? How much of her desire for dominance that is so obvious in the bedroom (and on the table, and in the shower, and in the backyard :) extends into real life?

It was only when I found a link to this site (linked from a BDSM user group) that I realized that this set of characteristics is also experienced by others, and that unbelievably, there were thinking, mature individuals with which we could explore and discuss this spectrum of relationship preference.

So in the last two weeks since we have found this site, I realized that there are many women like my wife who are not stereotypically submissive yet are unequivocally in need of boundaries from their men. Without over-explaining, I began firmly correcting her inappropriate behavior at the first sign of sarcasm, defensiveness, or inappropriate accusations, while making sure to provide support and tenderness just as quickly as her behavior improved. While I am not naive enough to think there won't continue to be challenges, the result has thus far been almost magical. We spend almost no time in conflict because I never let her stray from between the "white lines". Not coincidentally, our sex life has been great. Interestingly, verbal reprimands are all that have been re-

quired thus far. (We are still carefully exploring whether or not discipline-related spankings are right for us.)²²³

"THIS MAN" (21 FEBRUARY 2006)

I have been enjoying a relationship with a very masculine man. He can be a lot of fun with an upbeat personality. He can also be serious and to the point. For example, he seems to like to be the boss. This is a somewhat new type of experience for me, as in previous relationships I have held a lot of strength one way or another. This man is very quick to slice to the point and keep things on track. I may carry the conversation in different directions but he always goes back to the main point until he hears my response.

This man's ways tend to leave me breathless. I like his strength. Yet sometimes I find myself feeling like a kid. Or said another way, like I feel I am put in my place. That place feels like a traditional route. It is far from the independent woman I have been. That traditional place brings me a different kind of comfort and one that I feel I need and have been missing. To better explain it, I feel as though I am cared for and respected and treated like a woman who is in the company of a strong, knowing man.

This man is quick to demonstrate that he will use his masculine strength as he wishes and when he wishes. This is both physical and mental strength. If I try to kiddingly push him onto the bed, he is quick to grab and flip me first. If I say I am

going to spend my time watching some TV show that I really have no interest in watching, he'll tell me there will be a quiz.

This man is very respectful. He is old-fashioned. He has some standards, such as that ladies shouldn't swear. Of course not.

I do not think I have ever felt completely relaxed in the envelope of a man's love. Yet with this man, his strength beckons. He is more challenging in some ways than I am experienced at working with. Therefore, I find myself both attracted to his strength yet also wondering if I am betraying who I have grown to be—strong, independent, in control. And maybe control is the biggest flag of all. By relaxing into, and accepting, his male strength and position as a leader, who am I?

In a relationship in which the man is clear about the fact that he will take charge when he wants, is it normal to feel a bit “small”?? To be a capable, adult woman taking instructions (which he calls guidance) is odd. Yet, he is generally quite right in what he instructs. And in the end, I feel happier and usually achieve a goal.

In the past, this type of man is one whom I might have been quick to get angry at (i.e. “you'll not tell me what to do!”?), yet something about him and where I am in this place of my life, is very attracting to my mind.

It's just such a different place to be for me. I am not familiar with it. Can you help me to understand it?²²⁴

“HANDLE WITH CARE... AND HONOR AND FIDELITY” (22 FEBRUARY 2006)

I have always been both enamored with, and amused by, the female gender of our species. There is a sense of mystery about them. They have learned to deliver such mixed messages—signals that only another female can decode—that they leave the male gender confused, in doubt, unsure and oft-frustrated, but wonderfully puzzled.

Yes, females are wonderful creatures. Soft, yet tough. Conquerable, yet resilient. Feisty, yet gentle.

But, men, never forget: there is a part of a woman, a component of what makes them female, that is decidedly fragile. It is a part of them that is delicate. It is with this component that you must *handle with care*.

For men, the innermost part that is the core of his being is his ego. Tamper with his ego and you are fooling with the mental and emotional tooling of the man. For the woman, however, it is her heart.

The heart of a woman is very strong—yet very fragile (in this sense, something akin to the ego of a man). The heart of a woman who is loyal, faithful, true and solid is so, so fragile: it is her very being. It is what she opens to the man so that he can take possession of her. She places it in his hands with the utmost trust. It is up to the man to place value upon this trust. He must cherish it and guard it with utmost intensity, as fiercely as he would an attack by a rapist upon his woman.

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Fidelity in the relationship is all about protecting the heart of the woman, because it is from this trust-of-possession, and the respect of that trust that her man provides the value and self-worth that she derives from the relationship.

When a man takes this trusted possession and simply discards it through unfaithfulness, he communicates to her that her trust has no value to him. In his actions, he (sometimes unknowingly, yet) viciously attacks the being of the woman. She then questions her worth and the value of her trust.

Yet, it is we men whose being and worth should be questioned. What is the value of a man who would do such a thing? An honorable man would terminate a relationship in an honorable fashion. To do so would be to protect her heart and to guard her value and her trust.

No, it is the unworthy man that would risk her core, her being, in pursuing other challenges. It is the dishonorable man that would take this possession that she has entrusted to him, her heart, her soul, and flush it down the toilet as if it were so much refuse.

So gentlemen, particularly you younger fellows: understand the wonderful nature of your woman. Cherish it. In your relationship with her, deal with her from a position of honor. Honor the trust that she has handed over to you and surrendered to your care.

Handle with care.²²⁵

My fifteen-year-old daughter figured it out today: she is in love for the very first time.

This is about the third young man she's brought home since last summer. Thing One, the younger son of my best friend, is handsome, brilliant, and has a car and his own band. She was dazzled that a guy so amazingly talented and cute would be interested in her. But she gave him the gate after a couple months. "He didn't go out of his way for me. It's all about him, and I didn't ever once feel special."

Thing Two came along a few months later. He was closer to her own age — blond, preppy, dimpled, and heading for a glorious career as a politician. We liked him, too: he was great company at the family dinner table. But he didn't last long, either. "Too much energy," she said. "It's exhausting, like having a puppy around. He's just too eager all the time. He'll grow out of it someday — but I don't want to wait around for it." I understood, completely.

One night after school, Thing Two dragged along his best friend, K, over for dinner. "What's the story with him?" I asked my daughter. Compared to Thing Two, K was quiet, intense, and extremely confident. There was something about this boy that was deep and special. Not only did he have whole lot of soul for a kid of just 15; there was also a quiet confidence in his bearing that this old wife recognized as the seed of a very special kind of man. "He's got a black belt in tae kwon do. He's the best writer in the class — his ideas are different, and he thinks for himself. When K talks, he's al-

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ways got something to say. And he's never had a girlfriend, because he's looking for a real relationship, not just messing around."

That was a month ago. Three guesses which guy finally caught the heart of our girl.

They went out on their first Real Date last night. ("We were talking last week, and I told K I thought we'd be good together," she said. "He just said: that would make him very, very happy—like he'd been waiting for me to realize it all along. And that was it.") Today, she was chirping and burbling around the house all day (note that my long, cool drink of water does not chirp or burble—not ever).

"Mom, he's just exactly like (her stepfather)! I always feel so safe and taken care of when he's around—like I'm special to him, and he'd do anything to take care of me. He gives me his coat when I'm cold. He opens my doors. He pays for things. We had to wait at the bus coming home, and I felt totally protected. When we're together, he's completely focused on me. And he's got so much self-respect—I know he won't let me push him around. He's not like the other guys at all: I just feel like I can trust him with anything."

Evidently, somewhere in the mountains between Vancouver and Whistler, they're still turning out young men who know (appropriately) how to take a young lady in hand. Who knew?

And my daughter, apparently, has not only found one—she had the great good sense to recognize that what he offered was something worth having.

Yeah, it's a first love. Looks like it's going to be a pretty solid and intense one, though, for however long it lasts. What strikes me, though, is the way she consciously set out to find someone who would give her what she'd seen at home—a boy who would make her feel as precious, protected, adored, and comfortable as her stepfather makes me (and her, too). She wasn't happy until she found a young man who could give her that same gentle leadership, along with that same encircling care.

I've been wondering for a while if, how, and when I'd broach the subject of our unusual marriage with my kids. Turns out we were teaching this stuff all along, without even saying a word.²²⁶

"I BLAME THE KNEE-JERKERS" (6 MARCH 2006)

I found that other site* really painful to look at.

I know those women. Some of them are my best friends. And it's just horrifying to see how freaking shrieking they can be about this—how wide the gap between us is. I knew they didn't get it, but I had no idea how bad it could be.

It's not as though I haven't heard all this before, either. A couple times a month, I go out for a beer with my girlfriends. Most evenings, I get to spend the time listening to them

* See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20071008225828/http://www.takeninhand.com/when.rape.is.a.gift?from=304&comments_per_page=90>

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bitch about how exhausted they are, how much there is to do, and how their husbands are too busy to pay attention to them and won't do a goddamn thing to help. The guys are around; they're just lost in their work, or really into sports—and wherever they've gone, these capable, smart women are left alone carrying the full load for their kids, houses, and jobs.

They're angry, because they thought marriage was all about partnership. And they turned around one day, after five or ten or thirteen years, to find that their “partners” have been AWOL for longer than they care to remember, and have made it clear that they won't be coming back any time soon.

(Frankly, listening to these women whinge, I have a lot of sympathy for the guys. Who'd want to come home to all that angst?)

These same women see me with my husband, and are green with envy at how much he cares for me, dotes on me, listens to me. On weekends, he's not out playing golf or hockey; he's hanging out with me. When our kids need him, he's there. Often, when these same friends need help, he's there. Our family is his priority, the center of his life.

They can't figure it out. It makes them so confused and pained that they can't even really talk about it.

It's important to notice that I never get a turn in these conversations. If I try to speak, I get shushed right up. “Oh, but you're married to M. And we all know he's special.”

M is special—but not all that special. He's a tall, smart, good-hearted, introverted, geeky guy, made of

pretty much the same stuff as the rest of their husbands. And if I were to try to explain to them the magic that keeps this great cuddly bear of a man totally enchanted and engaged with me, the IBTP comments* are a pretty good cross-section of the stunned, hurt, angry reaction I'd get.

How gross! How retro! How perverted! You're sick, lost in your bodice-ripper fantasies, and destroying civilization as we know it!

Let's look at that again. I'm the one with a marriage that's so obviously perfect that they can't even bring themselves to let me talk about it—yet I'M the sicko here.

Got that? (Good. Now, would you please explain it to me? Oh, and for the record: I've never read a bodice-ripper in my life, unless you count Jane Austen.)

The fear of men I hear in these posts, and over those beers, is heart-breaking. It's all I can do not to say: Ladies, I may be a pervert—but I'm not the one here who's salting my microbrew with furious tears. I'm not the one screaming into cyberspace about how untrustworthy men are, or how wrong women are to let them be men.

I don't really identify as submissive (let alone a 24/7 sub), or BDSM. I'm not into rape fantasies (though I do prefer that he take full charge of our sex life, for complicated reasons having to do with past abuse and my own peace of mind). God knows I don't think all men have a right to

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20120111050736/http://blog.iblamethepatriarchy.com/2006/02/23/when-rape-is-a-gift/>>

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my body—just this one wonderful man, and only because and for as long as I choose to give it to him. Those of us who've been on this site for a while know that most Taken In Hand women tend to be smarter and more competent in their careers than average, so it's not about being some kind of prefeminist throwback, either.

What makes me different is that I found a man who's worthy of my total trust—and had the great good sense to trust him, literally body and soul, to do right by me. I let him be the man in his own house, gave him authority that mattered, and trusted him to exercise it well.

And the more I did that, the more he rose to the occasion, proved himself worthy of that trust.... and grew in his devotion to me in turn.

That is the whole of Taken In Hand. The rest is commentary.²²⁷

"BLOSSOMING IN HIS ARMS" (11 MARCH 2006)

It continues to be a surprise as to how many ways I seem to be subtly but noticeably blossoming in this man of mine's loving arms. I have changed in the most wonderful ways including feeling more relaxed within.

He offers assurance that he is there for me should I need him. He offers to protect me from anything that could threaten. He speaks with me in ways that I can be open and not feel shy, which sometimes I am a bit.

It is in talking that he is so effective. He never dismisses my thoughts or feelings. He asks ques-

tions and does not accept glossy answers. And this is how he helps me to speak how I feel.

And when we are not talking, he holds me in his arms in such a way that I wouldn't hear a freight train outside the window. Nor would I worry if it sideswiped the wall for he would keep me safe.

All of this is possible because I do not resist who he is.²²⁸

"WHO STOLE FEMINISM? BY CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS: A BOOK REVIEW" (13 MARCH 2006)

My recent futile encounter with the scary ladies on the *I Blame the Patriarchy* website led me to read this fascinating book.

Christina Hoff Sommers explains here the difference between "equity feminists" and "gender feminists". The equity feminists are those who campaigned for equal rights for women before the law and in education and work. Gender feminists are women with a permanent grievance who see all women as in thrall to the evil Patriarchy. The book is subtitled "How Women Have Betrayed Women" and it explains how gender feminism has alienated most women and left them eager to deny the "feminist" label.

Gender feminists dismiss the very real gains that women have made in legal rights, and in equality at work and in education as illusory, to them women are still subordinate to an oppressive patriarchal society. Ms Sommers writes:

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The loss of faith in classically liberal solutions, coupled with the conviction that women remain besieged and subject to a relentless and vicious male backlash, has turned the movement inward. We hear very little today about how women can join with men on equal terms to contribute to a universal human culture. Instead, feminist ideology has taken a divisive, gynocentric turn, and the emphasis now is on women as a political class, whose interests are at odds with the interests of men. Women must be loyal to women, united in principled hostility to the males who seek to hold fast to their patriarchal privileges and powers.

Reading this passage, I recognised the philosophy of the *I Blame the Patriarchy* group, who are one and all firmly convinced that there is a great masculine conspiracy to subordinate women.

Much of the book is about gender feminists attempting to alter school and college curricula to make them less oppressive to women. She can be very funny describing their excesses, as in this passage where she describes how a group of gender feminists were hoist with their own petard:

When McIntosh, Minnich, and their followers demanded that the oppressive European, white, male culture being taught in the schools be radically transformed, they had not imagined that anyone could look upon THEM as oppressors. Most members of the women of colour caucus boycotted the 1992 Austin National Women's Studies Conference I attended for its failure to recognise and respect THEIR political identity. The slighted group sent the conferees an

African-American women's quilt made from dashiki fabrics, as both a reprimand and a 'healing gesture'. The assembled white feminists sat before it in resentful but guilty silence. In the game of moral one-upmanship that gender feminists are so good at they had been outquilted, as it were, by a more marginalized constituency.

Much of the book is about gender feminists' activity on university campuses, and although it is interesting in its way I found myself getting slightly bored by it, as I am not very interested in university life, but the book became interesting again when it began to discuss the way statistics are distorted by gender feminists to support theories that turn out to be unsound to say the least.

Domestic violence, for instance, is a serious subject, and gender feminists do not do anything to help this serious problem by making wildly inaccurate claims about the numbers of women who are battered. Inaccurate claims are also made about wife-beating in past times, when it was not in fact as widely tolerated as gender feminists believe. According to Ms Sommers, there were laws against wife-beating in America since before the Revolution, and by 1870 it was illegal in almost every state, but even before then wife-beaters were arrested and punished for assault and battery. She quotes a scholarly article by Elizabeth Peck:

It has often been claimed that wife-beating in nineteenth-century America was legal.... Actually, though, several states passed statutes legally prohibiting wife-beating; and at least

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one statute even predates the American Revolution. The Massachusetts Bay Colony prohibited wife-beating as early as 1655. The edict states "No man shall strike his wife nor any woman her husband on penalty of such fine not exceeding ten pounds for one offense, or such corporal punishment as the County shall determine."

The chapter on "Rape Research" likewise shows how figures on the number of women raped have been wildly exaggerated, to figures as high as one in four, with no evidence to support this claim. Ms Sommers points out that the women who get most attention and money directed towards rape prevention are university women, whereas in fact the aid could be more usefully directed towards impoverished areas where rape is much more frequent. The women who get most protection from rape are the women who are least at risk.

The final chapter of the book "The Gender Wardens" was the most interesting to me, because this most directly relates to my experiences on the *I Blame the Patriarchy* site. There are a lot of women who, apparently, believe that fantasies should be controlled, and women should be educated NOT to have fantasies about being dominated, ravished, etc. Rhett Butler in "Gone With the Wind" comes in for much disapproval.

Ms Sommers writes of the gender feminists:

They condescend to, patronise and pity the benighted females who, because they have been "socialised" in

the sex/gender system, cannot help wanting the wrong things in life. Their disdain for the hapless victims of patriarchy is rarely acknowledged. When feminists talk of a new society and of how people must be changed, they invariably have in mind men who exploit and abuse women. But it is not difficult to see that they regard most women as men's dupes.

One of the things that apparently upsets gender feminists a lot is romantic fiction, and particularly the scene in *Gone With the Wind* where Rhett ravishes Scarlett. A survey found that most GWTW fans found the scene exciting. One respondent put it:

Scarlett's story is that of a woman who has lousy sex from two incompetent husbands (a "boy" and an "old man" as Rhett reminds her) who knew nothing about women. At last she finds out what good sex feels like, even if (or probably because) her first experience takes place in mutual inebriation and a spirit of vengeful anger.

The idea of "mutually pleasurable rough sex" is not high on the gender feminist list of entertainments. All the same, if the New Feminist philosophers were honest about taking women seriously, they would be paying attention to what, in most women's minds, is a fundamental distinction: Scarlett was ravished, not raped. The next morning finds her relishing the memory. Ms Friedman's insistence that Scarlett was raped was just another example of how gender feminists, estranged from the women they claim to represent, tend to view male/female relations as violent or humiliating to women.

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Apparently gender feminists would like to see a new kind of romantic fiction featuring gentle, sensitive men and love affairs of perfect equality, but they have not had much success promoting this idea. Romance fans by the million continue to read their politically incorrect romances.

Ms Sommers goes on to say:

Defending women who enjoy the idea of ravishment is not the same as holding a brief for any specific kind of fantasy or sexual preference. Fantasies of female domination are also popular. women are clearly capable of treating men as "sex objects" with an enthusiasm equal to, and in some cases exceeding, that of men for treating women as such. Male strip-shows seem to be as popular as Tupperware parties.

The belief that women should have only PC fantasies that conform to the gender feminist point of view is one that I encountered on the *I Blame the Patriarchy* website, so I am grateful to this book, which helped me to have a better understanding of what these very angry women are all about. They really do believe in crushing all freedom of thought.

This is a mostly highly interesting, informative, and frequently amusing book.²²⁹

"ATTRACTING GIRLS AS A NICE GUY WITH A CAPACITY FOR VIOLENCE" (18 MARCH 2006)

I was a reckless guy in my youth with a high tolerance for risk across a broad spectrum. I also had a great

deal of skill in administering violence and organising others to administer violence. I am also fat, have emotional/intimacy issues, and lack communication skills. Accordingly I possess three qualities that various individuals claim are attractive (others too but that's by the by :)) and three that most of you will agree are not.

Here follows my factual observations of reactions, their context and rationales to explain these.

As a kid at parties I would have trouble with girls due to my personal failings. But if violence occurred, this increased my attractiveness to girls. This was contextual and increased in proportion to the level of violence. One example is when a large armed gang assaulted a party I was attending and at which no girls were interested in me. I chased the entire gang away by calmly walking up to them, issuing a verbal line to put the leader off-balance, then sent him to hospital in about three seconds with a concealed weapon (a night stick). I turned on the next nearest gang member and the entire gang fled, with me in pursuit. When I returned practically all the girls were sexually interested in me. There were similar smaller-scale incidents.

Thus, a capability for violence and danger can be very attractive to girls. I know this is true. I can also tell you that this depends on the target of the violence. Beating the crap out of the undeserving appeals to a tiny minority of females but the majority find it disturbing and repellent. In my experience a capacity for violence diminishes in its attractive-

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ness to the vast majority (but not all) females the older they get.

I can also tell you that risk-taking activities such as motorbikes, joyrides and other naughty “adrenaline” crimes I won’t catalog did not increase my attractiveness to girls to a degree I could notice. But if an activity demonstrated great dexterity, skill, agility or strength then, so long as the girl was not put off by the context, these *would* increase my attractiveness. So, the simple risk-taking aspect might well be attractive, but not enough to offset my personal disadvantages, but demonstrating skill or strength in high-risk situations often would.

I was also very *nice* to girls, partly due to my lack of other skills (which I rationalise many girls who do not find it attractive believe to be the major motivation of all guys presenting the “nice” behavior) but mostly because my dad taught me I should be nice to girls. When I say nice, I was pleasant and attentive, and I listened—but also I know I must have come across as needy. To examine this properly you must detach it from other influences such as those previously discussed, or a talent for humor, etc. I have observed a very small number of other guys who are nice and attentive to girls (99% of the time—people aren’t perfect) but would in no way come across as needy or weak, and they are generally the *most* successful guys I know with a broad spectrum of girls.

So, to close this nice guy rubbish once and for all, I can inform you guys (and a few girls!) who think this is a failing that it is absolutely

not, and that the guy’s failing is in another area which he has chosen to ignore and explain away as being about the nice behavior. It is not. Believe me.

There are a number of girls (and few guys), often with vicious backgrounds, who view any decency as weakness. However, they are a tiny minority, unless the area is tough, in which case the occurrence of such individuals rises. They are generally hard and callous people themselves, or ripped to pieces so badly there’s little hope of reconstructing them, so you should have no problem identifying them.

The majority of girls react well to nice and mostly decent behavior and view it as a positive but it does not on its own win the girl in general since on its own it’s simply not stimulating. There must be other qualities present too (i.e. looks, confidence, perhaps cheeky humor, etc.). Do guys pick a girl simply by how nice she is? Of course not. A guy may well pick a girl who follows him around and appears to need him; however, this is simply a difference between men and women in that many men find this kind of neediness attractive (at least at first) while most women (and even fewer girls) do not.²³⁰

“BEING WITH A STRONGER MAN ALLOWS A STRONG WOMAN TO RELAX” (30 MARCH 2006)

Being involved with a man whom I perceive as being stronger than I creates a rather delicious atmosphere of erotic tension, like setting

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up two opposite poles, and the attraction is powerfully inevitable. And the closer the poles in charge the higher the risk of repulsion. Keeping that energy high can require help and reminders in the form of explicit demonstrations that yes he is indeed more powerful.

It can also be incredibly liberating, knowing that this man, this powerful man, has rights over you. Not because it removes responsibility for one's own actions. Rather, it reduces the deep fear, that isn't rare in women, that a man may be weaker than she is, that it is necessary to constrain certain parts of herself or destroy him somehow.

So when a woman who craves male control finds it she can finally really relax, safe in the knowledge that he will be able to handle anything she has to throw at him and he won't crumble.²³¹

"IS IT REAL?" (30 MARCH 2006)

I wonder about this quite a lot, especially when people suggest to me that *Taken In Hand* is only about bedroom games for me, and I am wondering about it now.

On Tuesday night, my husband was discussing a subject that occurs to him from time to time—the possibility of creating a spanking machine, for use when he's too tired or too busy to do it himself. "I could have a dial to adjust the hardness of the strokes" he said thoughtfully "It could go from "mildly irritated" to "extremely pissed off"."

Well, yesterday morning I did something incredibly stupid, which

made him really, really angry. He was so angry he did something he'd never done before, which was to give me a hard smack while the children were still in the room. I was slightly embarrassed, but I don't think they noticed; if they did they didn't comment.

Anyway, when we got back from taking the children to school he said to me "You know I was talking about the spanking machine—where do you think the dial is now?"

"Er, extremely pissed off?" I suggested. "Correct!" he said grimly, and took me upstairs to demonstrate. And it HURT. Afterwards he was still livid. "I want the kitchen cleaned up," he said to me, "and you are not to put the computer or the TV on until you are finished, and if any parcels come for you you're not to open them until I say you can. Is that clear?" "Yes," I said.

So I went and cleaned up the kitchen, and when a parcel came for me I left it on the table. My husband came down at lunchtime and noticed that it was unopened. "I'm glad you're doing as you're told," he said. "I'm feeling suitably chastened," I explained. He raised his eyebrows. "You don't imagine the chastening is finished, do you?" he asked me. "No," I replied meekly. Sure enough, I got chastened considerably more at bedtime.

This morning, when we got back from delivering the kids to school he said, "First things first, upstairs, knickers down." "The dial isn't still on "extremely pissed off", is it?" I asked nervously. "No, but I thought a warning shot across the bows would forestall any trouble today,"

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he retorted. It wasn't a particularly long spanking, but in my already tenderised state it didn't need to be.

The thing is, his anger was real, and so was my contrition, and the pain in my bottom is definitely real. But all this is a massive turn-on. I would never deliberately do something to make him angry, especially not that angry, and what I did was incredibly stupid, but his way of responding thrilled me very deeply, and I think about it now with this very intense guilty excitement. So does being so turned on and so thrilled by the whole thing mean it isn't real, or that it is just a bedroom game? Would it only be real if I hated it? I don't know, and I don't really care; I just wonder.²³²

"SM/D/s/ BDSM IN A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP?" (31 MARCH 2006)

If you are gagging, suspending and bullwhipping your wife, does that mean that your relationship can't be a Taken In Hand one?

If you are a woman who sometimes kneels before your man and reflexively submits to him, can your relationship still be classed as a Taken In Hand one, or are we now talking D/s or M/s?

If you have a closet full of BDSM paraphernalia or a dog cage in your bedroom (but you don't own a dog), can your relationship be a Taken In Hand one?

Actually, yes, it might well be a Taken In Hand relationship.

There are many readers whose skin would crawl at the idea of some of

the hardcore sadomasochistic practices some Taken In Hand folk employ, and there are other readers who disapprove of the use of any physical techniques of control at all, even spanking. However, despite what some readers might think, there are many couples in loving, considerately and consensually male-led, male-dominated, male-controlled (and thus Taken In Hand) relationships, who engage in all sorts of shocking sadomasochistic practices and overt control and submission.

Some think of this merely as sexual play; but for others, such activity develops as an inherent part of the control they both desire. On the Taken In Hand site, we focus on the psychology of control, and on issues pertaining to *relationships*, rather than on particular details of how the man maintains control, or what form his dominance or leadership takes. That is because Taken In Hand is not a sex site but a site about the underlying dynamics of male-led relationships. It is also because the underlying dynamics are present in a much wider range of relationships than those involving BDSM-style physical techniques. For example, you won't find any hint of bondage or whipping or in books like Laura Doyle's *The Surrendered Wife* or your average romance novel. But many of those who read these books have Taken In Hand inclinations, whether or not they like the idea of any particular techniques. Techniques are about form; this site is about the underlying substance.

But what determines whether or not a relationship is a Taken In Hand one is nothing to do with

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whether or not this practice or that is used. Those things are an individual matter. It is about whether or not the relationship is male-led because both the man and the woman *prefer* that, and it is about whether or not the relationship is psychologically healthy and fulfilling for both persons—the husband in a Taken In Hand relationship *puts his wife and relationship first*. And it is about sexually-exclusive, long-term, monogamous relationships, as opposed to “open marriages” or relationships in which one or both partners are sexually-intimate with others, or casual sex.

On this site, we value privacy and a certain modesty. There are many sites that clearly welcome exhibitionistic posts giving every last detail of posters' sexual adventures. This is not such a site. But although you won't see posts about BDSM sexual practices, there is a lot of sex happening in Taken In Hand homes, including, in some cases, hardcore BDSM.

Why do we ask readers not to post sex posts? Partly, it is a matter of taste. Many readers do find BDSM literature a bit repulsive rather than erotic. Many readers of this site strongly prefer not to read or post exhibitionistic material, and exhibitionism is huge in BDSM culture. We get many complaints whenever anything exhibitionistic does get onto the site. The other reason is that we are trying to keep the site focused on the *relationship* and the *psychology*. Blow-by-blow accounts of last night's hardcore BDSM sex would encourage further such posts and

before you know it Taken In Hand would have become a sex site.

I hope this reassures all those who have asked or wondered if their relationship can be Taken In Hand if they employ BDSM techniques or play.²³³

“HOW WE STOPPED THE ESCALATION OF VERBAL HOSTILITIES” (3 APRIL 2006)

Recently our pastor gave us an article talking about why marriages fail. It focused on a study by the university of Denver which developed a program called PREP which stands for the “Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program”. The information in the study has been used in a book titled *Fighting for Your Marriage*, by Howard J. Markman, Scott M. Stanley and Susan L. Blumberg, and has been featured on numerous TV newsmagazines like 20/20. The program talks about the four negative behavior patterns which can destroy relationships.

I found it interesting that my husband and I experienced all of these patterns regularly before choosing a taken in hand relationship. We are now experiencing fewer of these negative patterns and the main negative pattern we have overcome since being a taken in hand couple is escalation.

This occurs when partners respond back and forth negatively to each other, continually upping the ante, so the conversation gets more and more hostile. That was us to the T before becoming a taken in hand couple. We could have a huge blow-

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out fight over absolutely nothing. I was continually saddened by the constant negativity in our relationship and was only biding time until the divorce that was bound to happen became a reality.

One of us would start in with some negative comment about something stupid, and then the other would chime in negatively. Most of the escalation was caused by me not being able to control my negative comments. My husband was usually not the instigator of these kinds of incidents but he would join in once I got the ball rolling. The comments would escalate until we were yelling at each other or at least saying really hurtful things. We would be angry for days. In the days or weeks following the incident we would communicate very little because we were angry or afraid of repeating the past incident again. We would walk on eggshells because every interaction could blow up into a huge fight.

The amazing thing was that these fights arose from very small issues. It might be something as simple as deciding who would do the dishes and who would help the children with some project. I never understood why we fought so much over the smallest things. We would try to get along but it seemed that no matter how hard we tried, minute things would just escalate into huge arguments.

Escalation is almost a non-issue today. Now if I start in with my negative comments my attitude is quickly remedied. Being physically taken in hand releases my negative emotions leaving me with a better

attitude. Occasionally, I still feel irritated after being taken in hand but I keep my mouth shut until I can communicate in a more useful manner. I don't have to be obnoxious to communicate my wants and needs or my frustrations.

On those days when my husband is in a grouchy mood, which is rare, I am quiet and let him have his say. I try hard not to give an obnoxious response.

While I am not always as respectful as I feel I should be, at least I don't jump onto the escalation bandwagon. I know if I do I will quickly be reminded to keep my attitude respectful, and any negative emotion either of us may feel is quickly dissipated. My negative emotions are gone within moments. The discipline makes me feel about 100% more cheery after it's all done. My husband has a gentler manner afterwards as well. Usually whatever he was grumpy about in the beginning will have dissipated due to the fact that he was able to communicate his frustrations to me and I was willing to listen with a respectful attitude. I am then willing to listen with kindness and am truly concerned about whatever the issues are that were bothering him.

I can't even remember the last time we got into an argument that escalated to the level of hostility. I think there have been a few times when my husband was unassertive and I got out of line verbally, but he didn't allow his attitude to escalate. A person can't have an argument alone. Most of the time arguments don't escalate, because I have learned to control my mouth.

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Another way our Taken In Hand relationship has stopped arguments escalating is that when I start to go off the deep end my husband now verbally reminds me to keep my words under control. He firmly but kindly reminds me that that kind of attitude is unacceptable. Nine times out of ten that does the trick and I find a way to communicate without being hostile or cruel.

Lest you think I am a mouse and all communication has now ceased at our house I must tell you that we communicate much more than before. Since we began acting like the rational adults we are capable of being we are not as afraid to try to communicate together. We are both much more likely to try to solve problems through talking respectfully to one another. Before, we knew we couldn't control ourselves and the conversation would end up escalating so it got to the point where conversation was almost never happening and when it did it was almost always bad.

I think people should be able to work out these kinds of issues without needing to be taken in hand to keep their arguments from escalating, but obviously this is not so in many marriages or the divorce rate wouldn't be so high. In my case, being raised in a home with almost no boundaries or social parameters left me ill-prepared for marriage. I have always had a hard time carefully choosing my words, especially in my marriage, and it has certainly affected our relationship negatively. My husband tends to get pretty annoyed with mouthy women so we have always been an explosive com-

bination. Right from the start it was problematic and the older he got the less tolerance he seemed to have for my tendency to negatively verbalize my feelings. And the more comfortable I got with him the more likely I was to verbalize negative thoughts and emotions.

I'm not suggesting that everyone should choose to have a taken in hand relationship to keep their arguments from escalating. What I am saying is that undoubtedly those who opt to live in a Taken In Hand relationship will find that the escalation factor in their relationship is dramatically reduced as a result. It certainly worked for us.²³⁴

"MEN DEMANDING SEX" (6 APRIL 2006)

My husband has the right to demand sex whenever he wants, because I have given him that right. Being a man, with the standard male ego, he does prefer when I am into it, though. Therefore, he doesn't demand that I do anything that I am physically unfit for. If I am ill and he really needs some relief, i.e., he will not be able to get to sleep unless he, uh, scratches that itch, we work something out. He does the same for me.

Also, he doesn't just walk up and say, "We WILL have sex now, whether you like it or not, byotch!" though he could and I might actually find it a turn on, LOL. What he does is start hitting on me in the various ways that he has developed over our relationship that he knows I like. If I truthfully tell him, "I will have sex with you but I am really

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not in the mood because of XYZ" He still does not say "Well, you WILL have sex with me for I am your Lord and Master!", though again he could.

What he sometimes does in such an instance, though, is get very close up behind me, embrace me in a very dominating way and whisper in his most authoritative voice, something along the lines of, "You are the sexiest, hottest, most beautiful woman that I have ever laid eyes on. It is my greatest pleasure to have your love and submission. I want your body now and I will have it." Of course, by that point, I have totally forgotten what XYZ were and it is a good thing he usually has such a tight hold on me because I have already melted right there in his arms...

So there is demanding and then there is *demanding ...*)²³⁵

"A MAN WITH A BACKBONE CAN BE VERY SOOTHING" (7 APRIL 2006)

I find that despite what I would have thought a few years ago about how I would feel about a man making any sort of decisions for me, the more Mike makes, the better I feel. To be honest it seems totally ridiculous for a modern woman with an education to want anyone at all to make decisions for her. I must admit that I am not totally comfortable with this side of me. I am not sure if I have completely come to terms with it.

Wanting a man to be in control is almost completely in contradiction with my personality. I am strong willed, quick to form strong opin-

ions, not altogether agreeable with authority. I have, and still do, give Mike a real run for his money in the ways I have found to contradict him! I often will react to any attempt by Mike to take control by first telling why what he wants is completely out of the question, and just not a good idea. I will often get angry, even incredulous with him when he persists with an idea.

A good story I have about this is about what time we get up in the morning. Mike has to leave for work at a completely disgusting hour in the morning. I am by no means a late riser, but I like to get up at 7 am, and Mike is already at work at that time on most days. This means that Mike needs to wake up an indecent hour in the morning. It also means that he need to go to bed comparably early to most people. I am not always ready for bed when he is. So Mike decided at one point that I need to get up with him in the morning. That way we could spend time together in the morning. He argued that I could do whatever I normally do at night, a time I covet as a "no kid" do-whatever-I-want time, in the morning. I totally did not want to get up at 4:30-5:00 am. I balked at his attempt to take this control. His reasoning was solid; he wanted us to spend time together. He said, "Well you ARE getting up at that time, so just get used to it. It is what I want" It is what I think is best for us."

Seeing as I am always saying that I want a man in control you would think that I would have meekly said, "OK" and left it at that. Hahahahaha! I quickly became furious with Mike. I told him that I was a grown

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woman and he could not tell what time I had to get up in the morning. Of course he answered with he darn well could, and he was telling me what time I had to get up. The lawyer in me came out and started telling Mike the 101 reasons why his idea was not a good one. When he refused to engage me in this line of reasoning I got angrier and told him that no I simply refuse to get up. I want and need to sleep at the times I do, and I was not willing to change. Too bad, so sad for him. By now he was reminding me that I had better get both my tone and my attitude in check, and that he was not changing his mind. He said, "I cannot make you get up; I am telling you that you must. If you choose not to, that is your choice, but if your feet do not hit the floor less than 10 minutes after I get up in the morning your backside will pay dearly for it." End of discussion.

I was angry with Mike for pushing this issue. I did choose to get up in the morning with him the next day. Even though I was angry, it felt right in so many ways. No matter what I am feeling on the surface, I really want him to hold firm on the inside. Things feel right in the world when this is the case. This has been one of the hardest things for Mike to get around. The resistance I feel can be confusing in so many ways. I do not want him to give in to me just because I am angry with him. Although if you asked me this in the heat of the moment I would say that I really did think he was being unreasonable and that I really do want him to change his mind. The more firm he holds, the more safe, loved,

wanted, cherished and happy I feel. It is a strange thing; but it is right for us.²³⁶

"A MAN IN CHARGE NEEDS TO BE FIRM AND STEADY" (7 APRIL 2006)

Tevemer wrote:

I find that despite what I would have thought a few years ago about how I would feel about a man making any sort of decisions for me, the more Mike makes, the better I feel.*

the boss wrote:

I, too, find it very soothing when a man is decisive and firmly makes a decision when I am vacillating or unsure what I want. I think many women feel the same way.†

It seems so antithetical to modern cultural norms that a woman would find it soothing and/or thrilling that her man would have authority to make decisions on her behalf and in some cases sanction her behavior.

When first considering such a relationship the fear is that the man might overreach and misuse his authority. I suppose in some cases this is true. But from what I have read, and in my own experience, most men over time will figure out what is important to him and focus on those things. Those men who don't figure this out remain inconsistent in

* "A man with a backbone can be very soothing," 7 April 2006.

† See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/-20130128055301/http://www.takeninhand.com/a.man.with.a.backbone.can.be.very.soothing#comment-9504>>

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their leadership frustrating his woman because she does not know what she can expect from him.

When first contemplating this kind of life I had to determine what was important to me. What things did I want to control? What expectations did I have for her and our relationship? This is a process every man who desires a Taken In Hand relationship has to consider. He really needs to give this serious thought.

A woman who is attracted to this kind of relationship will appreciate her man's effort to take control. After all, she deeply desires his control. She is eager to feel his masculine presence and authority in her life. But she will become frustrated and later disenchanted and eventually lose confidence in him if he is not clear about those things that are important to him. Let's face it, women are attracted to confident men. The man who vacillates, who is unsure of himself, will overtime become less attractive.

A man who does not know his own mind cannot be decisive. How can he be firm with her when he needs to be? He need not control everything to gain her respect and cooperation. In fact, I would argue that the man who tries to control too much does so because he does not know himself. But when a man has a sense of himself, knows what he wants from his woman, she will relax into his leadership because she feels comfortable knowing that he can act decisively.²³⁷

"TAKING HER" (7 APRIL 2006)

There are times when I want her, and there are times when I NEED her.

There are times when she is relaxed and very available, and there are times that she is frazzled, rushed, and while available, just not in synch.

While she is always available, I try to match my mode to her current situation.

Forcefully taking her or "demanding" that she meet my needs is an approach that I try to employ to match her mode of emotional availability.

When she is in an edgy state, I approach her with great tenderness, always leaving her the option of delaying the inevitable. Yet, she knows that her responsibility to meet my need remains an unfilled event.

Properly timed and used, both approaches provide great enjoyment to both of us.²³⁸

"LOVING, SUPPORTIVE AND KIND CONTROL" (11 APRIL 2006)

In a relationship with a woman, I have a compelling need and desire to maintain pervasive control. But it is not domineering or oppressive. And I have no desire to micromanage my woman's life. In fact, this constant energy is rather subtle, and it is also full of kindness and its focus is her well-being. But it is absolute, and she and I always know it and feel it. It is conveyed by every look and every touch. And my woman experiences this active control constantly. It is a tingle of poten-

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tial, an absolute certainty that I have the power to do whatever I want whenever I want.

From within it comes the nurturing and the spoiling, and my absolute delight in enabling the woman I love to achieve all of her ambitions and dreams and become more with me than she ever could have without me. And from within it comes all of the intensity that she can handle.

And while I am quite decisive and firm, it is always open to my woman to change my mind through a compelling argument supported by objective evidence. (I am rational, after all!) But becoming angry, and yelling or crying, or becoming petulant and sulky would *never* affect my decision, and could only lead to a spanking.

But, most of the time, the woman with whom I am in a relationship is able to get whatever she wants whenever she wants simply by telling me or showing me that it would make her happy.

I need to be in control, I need intensity and, most importantly, I need for my woman to be happy. And I need to be the reason for her happiness.

I need for her to always come to me for acceptance, understanding and support, regardless of the circumstances or the situation. And I need the reason for this to be that I have consistently shown her that doing so will always make everything better. This gives many a man a sense of power, but for me it has nothing to do with power. Instead, it brings me joy because I am bringing peace and security into her life. And,

more than any other factor, it validates me as a man.

I bend my woman to my will only in ways that are important to me, or that excite or please me. There is none of the nonsense of doing something arbitrary just to show her that I can.

That I could if I wanted to is a foregone conclusion, which is reinforced constantly in reality. But the details are like a dance in which we respond to each other from moment to moment. And I am always looking to respond to her needs of the moment. But the choice is not hers and she is compelled to obey, and that is the key. In that sense, being stripped and then given a bubble bath followed by a sensual massage in a room full of scented candles involves being controlled as much as being stripped and then whipped. But, depending on her mood, she might resist one more than the other. :-)

If she were not feeling well and needed to rest for her own good, she would have to submit to being waited on hand and foot, even though I suspect that her natural inclination is to keep going until she becomes quite ill. But, again, I wouldn't give her that choice.

In a relationship, I take my woman and use her for pleasure in various ways quite frequently. And, perhaps, forcing her to reveal herself through all of the ways in which she can be brought to wild abandon puts her under my control even more than merely throwing her on the bed, ripping her clothes off and...²³⁹

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"NEEDING MY WIFE" (28 APRIL 2006)

Wanting my wife is a totally physical response to how she looks, behaves, dresses, smells, tempts, excites, talks, ... And, after many years of marriage, she knows how to get my attention.

Needing is, for me, emotional.

Many of us men, unlike many of you ladies, are (sometimes to our detriment) able to put our emotions into a box. We often segregate feelings and then call on them when we want them. It is our way of controlling our world—of protecting ourselves.

There are those days, when I have simply been decimated by the world that I live and work in—when all the defense shields have taken their hits and are weak, when the emotions in the box are seeping through the cracks in the shield and I am losing control. These are the days that I *need* her—the days that having her close to me, under me, me inside her and she inside me (emotionally, of course—the reverse of the physical act of intercourse).

The wonderful part of it all is that she knows me and is always available to me—waiting to be told that I want her or need her.

You see, I have her very much in hand. And, she has me very much in heart.²⁴⁰

"TO PROMISE OR NOT TO PROMISE?" (29 APRIL 2006)

Is it a good idea to make formal promises when starting a Taken In

Hand relationship? I think not. Making promises would feel artificial to me. Especially promising not to be quarrelsome or difficult, which would be almost impossible for me to keep to.

When I suggested to my husband that we try to have a Taken In Hand relationship I was quite overwhelmed with surprise and gratitude when he agreed, and seemed to understand what I wanted. Carried along by a flush of enthusiasm, I was absolutely determined to be the perfect wife from now on. I would keep the house immaculate, never be sulky or argumentative, and never give him cause to be annoyed with me again.

Well, that didn't last long. The zeal with which I went at the housework at first soon wore off. Boredom set in once more, and although I still try a lot harder than I did, I've long since given up my attempt to keep the house immaculate, because I soon realised that would put me in a mental home before long.

Moreover, my husband didn't actually seem to want me to overdo it. I remember, after watching me rushing round cleaning things for some time on the first day he said to me "I think you've tried enough for one day".

And then there was the day when I'd been vacuuming for rather a long time, and he wanted to watch something on TV, and said to me "Don't you think you've vacuumed for long enough now?". I threw a major tantrum. "You've spent the last 22 years telling me I don't do enough vacuuming," I shrieked, hurling the vacuum cleaner petulantly to the floor.

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"Now you're saying I'm doing too much, why don't you make your ****ing mind up?"

My husband was not in the least disturbed by this. "We'll talk about your little outburst later" he said calmly. I knew what he meant by "talk" and it had an instantly calming effect on me.

I was dismayed to find that I could still get sulky and petulant after all my good intentions to be the perfect submissive wife, but I was very thrilled to find that my husband was able to cope with this, and not only didn't let me wind him up when I got like that, but was able to take control and make me behave myself again without laying a finger on me. My respect for him increased by leaps and bounds, and has continued to do so since.

Life doesn't always turn out the way you think it is going to. Although I didn't make any formal promise to my husband, I did say that I would try to do what he wanted, and not argue with him, and if the first time I had got sulky or quarrelsome with him he had turned around and said to me "You promised to be submissive to me, and now you're not doing it. Why?" or something like that, it would not have helped in the least, it would just have made me feel guilty in addition to being bad-tempered.

My husband's ability to rise above my bad moods and restore order is one of the main things that has kept our relationship going. Throwing my promise back in my face would not have worked. Although I didn't think it through at the beginning, I now know that our relationship is

never going to be entirely free of tension, and what I need is for my husband to be able to grab the reins and get us back on course when I get out of hand. I didn't ask him to do this, he just does it instinctively, and no formal promises could have covered that.²⁴¹

"BDSM PRACTICES IN OUR TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP" (30 APRIL 2006)

I've been lurking on the Taken In Hand site for awhile but did not post before because I didn't think you guys would think our relationship qualifies as Taken In Hand. However, I was pleased to read this posting* by The Editor of this site which contained some things that changed my perception. The line about "If you have a closet full of BDSM paraphernalia or a dog cage in your bedroom (but you don't own a dog), can your relationship be a Taken In Hand one?" certainly got my attention, LOL!

Our relationship is male-led because both my husband and I *prefer* that, like The Editor wrote about, and our marriage is sexually-exclusive in every sense, and we're as psychologically healthy as any other couple, but ... my husband wants and gets (most of the time, LOL!) my total obedience, and some of his control is sexual ... including sadomasochistic elements with occasional humiliation play and he calls me his slave (or worse epithets, LOL!).

* "SM / D/s / BDSM in a Taken In Hand relationship?" 31 March 2006.

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It's difficult to write about this without being graphic but I find it charming that this site avoids graphic content so I'll make the effort. My husband will gag me and suspend me from the ceiling while he balances the check book or reads the paper, then he might choose to whip me not because I did anything "wrong" but just because he wants to. He will also tie me up, ban me from going out on a certain day, require me to be naked to order, and to submit to different sexual practices to order, and more that couples here might find "too BDSM". Other things he does are more ordinary, like he tells me to wear a certain outfit, or to be at a certain place at a certain time, or to exercise for a certain amount of time, or he'll tell me not to be out too late, not to walk home alone at midnight, LOL!, or not to do things that cause me stress, like arguing with this one woman I know who always gets me upset.

All the practices in our relationship work for us, and many of the more extreme practices I suggested myself, LOL!

One thing I want to say to those that object to BDSM practices is that what we do is not just role playing, it's real control. Some say that to be real, control has to be control that is not sexual, control of everyday decisions. My husband has control of all decisions, including everyday ones, so I reckon that's pretty real, LOL! I never thought I'd end up married to such a perv as my husband but I'm happy with my life and VERY happy with my man. Control is control if you ask me. I don't differentiate. If we stopped all the sexual control etc

I'd feel less controlled and trust me that would not be a good thing, LOL! YMMV!

If you haven't got a husband you can trust, you have to be careful, but when you've got a husband you can trust with your life and your heart, you can go with the flow and get into more extreme practices and total obedience without concern, if you want to, which most don't, I know. If he wants to blindfold me and tie me up and do things to me that would be too graphic to mention here, why shouldn't he? He's the man leading our marriage and he's in control, and I like it. Maybe some other Taken In Hand readers should try total obedience and give the green light for sexual control too. You might even like it, LOL!

It seems like some readers think there's a divide between sexual control, SM, etc, and everyday control, but in my marriage there's no divide, it's all the same to me, it's all him being in control and me submitting (or not, LOL!) to his control and dealing with the consequences when I don't. This marriage is what I've always wanted, but I didn't know before I met my husband that I'd be in a marriage like this, or that I'd like it. I knew I wanted my husband to run the show but I didn't know I'd like the pervy things my husband likes. I guess I'd been burned by a previous relationship and thought I didn't want certain practices, whereas the truth was that it wasn't the practices I didn't want, but the guy who burned me that I didn't want. With my husband I naturally want to please him, because I feel so safe and loved, and he cares so much and

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pampers and spoils me rotten—when he's not “abusing” me, as he puts it! (Come to think of it, the “abuse” is all part of the pampering in my case, LOL!)

I'm happy the editor said that some Taken In Hand relationships do incorporate BDSM or sadomasochistic practices, because Taken In Hand is one of my favorite sites and I can relate to a lot of the ideas I read here, and I always felt like our relationship was Taken In Hand but I couldn't be sure because of the more pervy elements of my husband's control of me, LOL! Like the others that have commented, I'm so happy you wrote that posting.²⁴²

safety net that I need to trust his judgement.

While good communication, in my view, used to mean sensibly talking and talking and talking matters out to achieving mutual agreement, I now view it as being multi-faceted—emotional, intellectual and physical. Sometimes you let your mind talk, sometimes you let your heart talk. Whichever the way, I find that good communication is far more satisfying than the facade of equality.

Why a facade? Because if you're not communicating well, your relationship will always be in a state of unequal balance.²⁴³

“GOOD COMMUNICATION” (9 MAY 2006)

There was a time when I would have insisted on equal this and that in a relationship. Equality gave me control and emphasized I would never be a doormat. I have learned something better than focusing on equality, is to focus on communication.

My partner is fascinating in communication. This includes he makes no apologies if he sometimes sounds just a bit (ha!) chauvinistic in the most old-fashioned, traditional of ways. And he tells me there are times when I, a modern woman, won't like what he says.

Because he consistently communicates about who he is, I find that it is easier for me to trust his opinions or actions even if I may not always agree. His consistency gives me the

“I NEVER LEARN” (10 MAY 2006)

I should by now know better than to make rash statements on this site, because fate has a way of catching me out at times like this. Nevertheless, a couple of days ago I posted a message to the Yahoo group in which I confidently stated that my husband's influence over me waned once he was (as he is at the moment) overseas. Long distance control, I declared, had no influence over me at all.

So yesterday afternoon my husband rang up to talk to us, and the children got to the phone first. While listening to their innocent prattle, my husband deduced (correctly) that I had done something that he had expressly forbidden me to do, and that he feels very strongly about. When I came on the phone he charged me with this, and I panicked and hung up the phone. He rang again, and I let the children

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answer it and refused to talk to him, he rang back a third time and no.2. son came upstairs (where I was pretending to be busy) and said to me "Dad says if you don't come and talk to him right away, he's going to be really angry with you." So I went. He spoke to me sternly but calmly, and my panic subsided somewhat.

This morning I got an email from him saying "Do you still love me?", so I emailed him back saying yes I loved, him and I was sorry I hung up the phone, but I'd panicked because I thought he was going to be really angry with me and start shouting or something. He replied saying "You don't need to worry, I was very angry, but this is the New Era of Detente and we'll work it out (or at least your bottom will). It might have to be the all-week spanking this time."

So here I am in a thoroughly chastened mood, and he's 5000 miles away and hasn't even laid a finger on me (yet). Why did I say he had no influence over me at a distance? I might have known it was asking for trouble.²⁴⁴

"LIFE WITH WOMAN AND HOW TO SURVIVE IT, BY JOSEPH H. PECK: A REVIEW" **(13 MAY 2006)**

I got involved in a discussion on another site about whether there was ever a Golden Age of DD, when all women knew their place and wives were routinely spanked by their husbands. This period is generally thought to have come to an end in the sixties, with the advent of feminism. Seeking evidence of wife-

spanking as an acceptable social practice, I found this little book by Dr. Peck, which contains several references to the subject.

In Chapter 8, *Your Own Personal Gettysburg*, he writes:

Remember, she may fight you like a tiger to impose her will upon you, but she hopes that you will slap her down either literally or figuratively and will be even more upset if you fail to do so. Don't apply brute force unless you are big enough to take her over your knee and spank her; a black eye may be used as evidence in court, but no woman will expose a reddened bottom to the jury.

However, Dr Peck goes on to insist that he has never found it necessary to adopted "such violent measures". Later in the book he describes an incident where a woman patient is making a lot of fuss about being pregnant. He says to her husband (within the wife's hearing).

"She would recover quicker if you took her over your knee and lammed the daylight's out of her."

This brought a snort from above and she yelled "Him and who else? The two of you couldn't spank me."

I threw down my hat and bag and started up the stairs two at a time. "Do you want to bet?" She retreated to her bedroom and locked the door, yelling through the crack "You're a damned old savage and I'll never speak to you again."

Writing about women in their fifties and their tendency to create dramas about their health, he says of his wife:

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She used to cuss and wish that she had never married a doctor because the other girls seemed to have so much fun having fits, and she was afraid to try it for fear of a spanking. That fear was enough, I was never driven to violent measures of any kind in our domestic relations, but I have seen plenty of other cases where they seemed justified.

I often think that spankings, either for the patient or her family, are the best possible prescription for many feminine ailments. I once lost the practice of a very good family because I would not tell a husband that it was necessary for his wife's health that she be sent to southern California for the winter. Her cousin had moved there from the East and was having such a good time that she wanted the lady to come down and enjoy it with her. She went, so I suppose some other doctor was more obliging than I was in that case, but she ought to have been spanked instead.

Dr Peck talks a lot about the benefits of spanking, and how he thinks this or that woman ought to be spanked, but he never actually does it himself, nor mentions any case he knows of where a woman actually was spanked, to her benefit or otherwise. Proof that talking about spanking women was more acceptable at this period, but neither Dr Peck nor apparently anyone he knew was actually doing it.

This book is an odd mixture of cynicism, sentimentality and sweeping generalisations. Dr peck believes firmly that a woman's place is in the home, he deplores career women and thinks that a woman who wants to do anything other than look after a husband and raise a family has

something wrong with her. He believes that the home is the woman's domain and that a man who has anything to do with domestic tasks emasculates himself. This rigid separation of men's and women's worlds is all quite a recent notion, in previous centuries home was as much the man's domain as the woman's, a man was expected to be involved in the running of the household, just as a woman was expected to be involved in her husband's business. What Dr Peck considers normal would not have been normal in the pre-industrial era.

Sometimes Dr Peck can be quite cynical, as when he says of women's mating instincts.

Monogamy is not a natural state with EITHER sex, but in the male its nonobservance is simply a form of indoor sport, while his partner looks beyond the moment of ecstasy and fixes her mind's eye upon the result of the union.

Dr. Peck deplores modern labour-saving devices, because he believes they leave women with too much time on their hands, and consequently they got bored and discontented with the proper lot in life , he says:

Woman has always required some activity for her hands. She cannot sit in the sun and read all the time"

(Dr Peck never met me, or he would have to revise this opinion).

Dr Peck's strong opinions were formed partly by his own observations and partly by the prejudices of his times. His book makes very

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strange reading nowadays, and parts of it are quite unpleasant (he can be quite savage towards any woman who doesn't fit his idea of how a real woman should behave). The book doesn't really provide evidence that domestic discipline was more widespread in the fifties, though it does show that talking about spanking a woman was at least more acceptable then than now. But a lot of the other things that Dr Peck says in his book would nowadays be considered quite outrageous, not just the spanking references, and a good thing too, in my opinion. This book is interesting in its way, but definitely a museum piece.²⁴⁵

"SPANKING IN ANGER" (17 MAY 2006)

I have found that it is possible for my husband to spank me when he is angry, and yet still be in control.* Indeed, one of the most remarkable things about the relationship we have now is the degree of self-control that he possesses; it's a quality I never suspected him of having before. In the past, when he used to lose his temper and rant and rage at me I used to feel utterly miserable, and it was because I had this only half-acknowledged longing for him to be in control, not just of himself but of me too.

Now I find that he can keep his temper even when he is seriously angry about something. The first time he ever spanked me when he was really, really angry about some-

thing I felt a sense almost of exultation at realising that, in spite of his anger, he was keeping it under control, and although he was (as he puts it) "taking it out on your bottom" he was totally in command of the situation. I was completely and utterly thrilled by this.

In fact, I think I really prefer him to spank me when he is angry, if he is genuinely angry about something, because then I feel both of us get more out of it. He gets to relieve his anger by thrashing me soundly, and I get that deep sense of peace and pleasure that, no matter how much my bottom is hurting, comes from feeling that he is in command of the situation. I don't actually want him to be angry with me, but if he is, then I want him to be able to find release from his anger through spanking me.

If he waits too long after his anger has cooled, it can sometimes have a slightly anti-climactic effect. For instance, he was abroad last week when he found out I had done something he specifically forbade me to do, and he was very angry. Now, if he had been home that day or the day after, I'd have got spanked hard, and I would have felt really, seriously punished. As it was, a week went by before he got home, and although he did spank me, his anger by then had cooled and I didn't get that sense of emotional intensity that I do get when he spans me when he's angry. The edge had gone off it.

There was an occasion a while ago when he spanked me when he was really pissed off about something, and after giving me twenty extra-hard whacks with the paddle with-

* "Is it a mistake to spank when angry?" 14 December 2004.

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out any warm-up (the most brutal form of spanking) he put the paddle down and said, "I'm not doing any more because I'm too angry, I don't trust myself not to get carried away." I was grateful for his control, and also rather guiltily intrigued by the thought of what he might do if he did get carried away!

But the thing that has wrought such a change in our relationship is feeling that I can trust him not to get carried away, and to keep control. I can trust him to spank me when he's angry because I know that, along with the anger, the control is there too.²⁴⁶

"SO GRATEFUL - TAKEN IN HAND HAS SET US FREE" (22 MAY 2006)

Until last week, my secret desire was one that I thought I was alone with. Despite three years of happy and monogamous marriage to Tim, I felt dishonest as I could not tell him what I was aching for inside. My true desire was for complete submission to him. Like many of your readers, I am all for equality of the law and civil rights, employment etc., but for me, I cannot escape what my nature is demanding of me. I thought eventually that I would have to tell Tim what I really wanted. In our love-making, he would take the lead and even pat my bottom with half spansks, which he knew sent me wild. Over the years I have often submitted to his will in decision making.

However, something more was needed. I was terrified of going into what seemed an extreme relation-

ship with a partnership already established. One night, I happened to be browsing when I came across this site. I heard Tim walking by the study where we keep the computer. My instinct was to quickly switch off the link, but with a beating heart I waited and was aware of him sitting down quietly next to me. We read in silence for a while and then he asked me what I thought of these women who were in hand. I remember the flush on my face and the sensation of thrill and danger as I turned to him and said, "I would love to be in hand totally, Tim."

We talked until the small hours that night. I remember it as an ecstatic release. At one point I explained that I would love to sometimes be nude when he was dressed, so he undressed me then with love and I sat naked on his lap whilst we went on defining what we both wanted. Feeling vulnerable and naked whilst in his loving strong arms was a spur to total honesty.

Since then, I have found that our relationship has been cleared of muddle, that my submissive yielding has made us both defined and at peace. He has spanked me properly now a few times and I have spent some time naked for him. The nudity is liberating as we would only previously be naked in bed or for sex. It is my way of sometimes feeling feminine and vulnerable.

I am so grateful for your website in setting us free.²⁴⁷

"HOW TAKEN IN HAND HAS TRANSFORMED MY WIFE" (23 MAY 2006)

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Thank you for creating this website. It has changed my wife completely and it is in account of your labor of love that made her who she is now and it has made both of us very happy and content.

I have been married to my wife for 7 years. When I was courting her then, I knew her to be an assertive 23 year old woman and sometimes, quite a nagger.. but it did not stop me from proposing marriage to her. A few years after marriage, I questioned whether or not I had made the right decision in marrying her.

Being notoriously independent, she insists on having a job right after having our first child. I didn't mind at first because I love her, but we just could not afford the exorbitant fees that personal midwives require. So we sat down and talked. I told her that she needs to be home during the first few years of the baby's life. My wife, being the assertive woman as she is, nagged for an hour and downright refused.

I didn't want to raise any issues with her, so I went to bed feeling so angry and bitter after this argument. Little did I know that when I fell asleep, she logged on to the internet and by chance, found your website. Later on, I found out that she had spent around 4 hours reading through the articles of the contributors.

The very next morning, my wife served me breakfast in bed (to my surprise) and told me how much she loves me and our baby. After that, she looks me up with tearful eyes and said how sorry she was for being overbearing and that she deserved to be punished for the pain

she caused me. She tendered her resignation, willingly deferring to my wishes to be a housewife and take care of our child.

I can't recall any significant argument between us since my wife came across your website. It has completely transformed her authoritarian nature into one that is gentle, pleasing, and submissive. Petty spats, however, are inevitable, and when that happens, I give her a sound spanking and she kneels down before me with her head bent down in submission. It never fails to melt my heart. And by being submissive, she is making our relationship stronger day by day.

Once again, thank you for your website. It has certainly made our family more complete, happier, and stronger. And yes, I did marry the right person, and I would never trade her in for another woman.²⁴⁸

"THINGS CAN CHANGE" (27 MAY 2006)

Hello. You might remember my personal ad* on this site that was posted a while ago; it was titled "The Bridget Jones without the Hang Ups". Within days of posting that introduction, I met someone through a well-known internet dating service, and I felt so confident about this man that I decided to remove my post from Taken In Hand and take my chances on this man who knew nothing about Taken In Hand.

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20130116150622/http://www.takeninhand.com/personal.ads>>

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At 32, I had been through so many relationships of doom that I was determined that this time I would be insistent that my great love understand my need and desire for a Taken in Hand relationship. I was certain that if this type of relationship were established it would have a significant positive impact in many areas.

In the years leading up to this, I had wrestled with my desire to be spanked, hoping that it would go away. But as time crept on, I kept finding myself back with the same desire, the same longing that I had struggled with since I was about 5 years old. I was ashamed and embarrassed and felt that I must be weirder than weird. Just the mention of the "s" word put my ears on high alert and I was sure my face blush and give my secret away. I recall how there were times of boldness during a heightened sexual awareness that even the most sexually charged macho men in my relationships would not feel comfortable providing even playful spankings because of the true committed aspect of submitting they knew would unfold. But I eventually reached a conclusion that I was not going to fight my desire any more and that whom-ever I decided to share my life with would have to understand and love this part of me as the desire had not gone away no matter how hard I wished it to.

Before my man and I ever met face to face, I sent him the link to the Taken in Hand website and a copy of my introduction that was on the site. Although my love did not have a previous understanding or desire

for this specific type of relationship, he seemed to hold a respect for it and a willingness to learn and understand me. He was curiously aroused and motivated to pursue me. Based on this, I went forward in meeting him, and I have never had a more fulfilling relationship based on common interests, values, shared dreams and goals, and just feeling that he is THE one I had been looking for my whole life. He was sweet, tender, compassionate and fun. I had the highest hopes that my love would understand me totally and fulfill my need to be physically taken in hand and spanked. I had, after all, supplied him to the inside of my soul with written revelations of my deepest desires.

Surprise! He didn't. He read a ton of articles on the Taken in Hand site, he read my personal ad, and despite being very smart, he *just didn't get it*. Somehow he kept misinterpreting it as a dominating or controlling perspective, and that isn't what Taken in Hand is all about, I think. It's about loving and guiding with firm direction toward good things and willingness to provide the consequences if defied to ensure I stay on the correct path and do not self-destruct. (This is my own understanding, I know others have different perspectives.)

I cannot begin to express the frustration I felt with him. I just couldn't understand how such a rocket scientist genius like him could not get it; but he was so wonderful in every other way I could not part from him.

Then there were the times when he would sort of get it and it was I who would suddenly be in a totally op-

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posite frame of mind and totally unreceptive. Then I would wonder why I had responded like some kind of cold fish. Confusing for both and not very encouraging from his perspective, I imagined. It was as though I wanted it but when it came right down to the moment, I either did not want it or I dismissed his attempts because they weren't exactly in line with how I imagined it would be.

Have you ever been there? It's like the Super-Independent and Totally Un-Submissive in you decides to kick in. This confused him beyond words! I was absolutely sure that if I just expressed exactly how we could get started, eventually everything would fall into place. I wrote a script of sorts complete with the how, when and what for's that had to be in place for me to be submissive to him.

Shortly before we tied the knot I began to have recurring health issues from the past of stomach problems and feeling just so awful that I really began to doubt that maybe I was doomed to live in misery and that my Love deserved someone more physically healthy than myself. The longer I was sick the more doubts crept into my mind that I was not deserving of a truly good man and good life. If you have ever been truly sick for a time you can get stuck in a place of feeling so badly about yourself, your past mistakes, your shortcomings and faults. When you can't even get out of bed some mornings, you have unlimited hours to invite self-pity and self-loathing into your thoughts. I did everything my doctor prescribed and recom-

mended. Then a funny thing happened. I started to read my Bible, and the more I read, the more peace I found in myself and the more physically better I began to feel. Not all at once, just dribs and drabs of energy, renewed spirit. I began to start doing little things for my husband that I didn't normally do for him.

As my energy returned, I found myself going the little extra step for him, trying to think of his needs before my own. You would not believe what happened the more I did this. I told you my Love was compassionate, loving and kind? Well, he began to be more so. He started thinking of my needs before his own. The more kindness I showed him even in my own distress, the more he showed me in ways I had never dreamed any dream man were capable of. A little example is when I fixed dinner. I usually just threw together our plates of food as a chore and suddenly I started taking care in how I arranged the food to be most appealing and even cutting up the meat on occasion so he could enjoy it to the fullest without distraction. I started to focus on the little things that matter to him that I had never given serious thought to. These little acts of love on my part started to come back to me quadrupled in the unbelievably tender ways that I cannot capture with words.

Somehow, I have found a path in life that amazes me every day. My husband got a raise through work, I found my passion career-wise, I found a whole new inspiration in each day like each day was a lucky day. I've found a lot of things about

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myself. I am finding personally that when I start to have obsessive thoughts of spanking on a discipline level, that usually I am very self-focused and not really in tune to others' needs, specifically my husband's. It's almost like a barometer of keeping myself in focus. My desire has all but left for the physical level of discipline. I remember in the past, when I used to be so totally focused on the act of spanking, how miserable I used to feel on the inside when it wasn't coming to pass. Now, I do not have that burning desire any more. The desire has faded; it no longer rules me. It's as though my submissiveness is more refined, more mature and the goodness of being a submissive wife has informed who I am, and all sorts of good things are pouring out of me.

I now have a sense of peace and a totally different perspective on control in our relationship. I used to feel that to be submissive to my husband meant that I was less of a person than he. Now I know that we are both equal but in very different ways to suit the needs of one another and to extend to the family I hope we someday have. When I think back to the subconscious feeling of needing a man to correct me and guide me, and when I think of the lengths I went to, to find the kind of man I thought I was seeking, I cringe. I endangered my life in past years, on occasion meeting up with men on adult internet sites with a proclaimed similar interest only to find their interests were very dark and deep in a disturbing way. If you are wrapped up in disturbing dark-

ness through submission, that is not good.

Since I have discovered my true self and have become more accustomed to understanding myself and understanding what I am here on earth for, I can, without doubt, proclaim that my husband is more of a leader in our home than ever before. Our home is peaceful, loving, and I have never been happier (and also cleaner and more organized than I was ever dreamed I could be). Even my fears and jealousies of other women faded away as I became confident that I am a woman who cannot be replaced. I have become confident in exactly who I am, which is a helpmate to my husband, and I am cherished and loved beyond my wildest dreams!

I just felt a deep desire to share this with anyone who may have felt similar to myself in hopes that it may shorten your own struggle for the relationship you want.²⁴⁹

"HOW TO READ THIS SITE" (4 JUNE 2006)

If you are new to this site, you might well be appalled by what you read, and may even think that we Taken In Hand folk should be locked up.

To minimise the risk of unfortunate misunderstandings, please keep in mind as you read that people on this site are writing about what sexually excites and thrills them. This is true even when it seems otherwise. There are many different ways of having a wonderful Taken In Hand relationship, and what thrills one

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couple will make another couple feel positively ill. The important thing is that the mere fact that something you read turns your stomach or makes your skin crawl does not mean that those involved feel the same way.

So what might you find on this web site that might disgust you? Well, no doubt many different things. But here is a small selection:

You might read material that seems to be suggesting that men are superior to women, or that women need a man's control to stop them going off the rails, or that a man, being a man, has a right to control and correct his woman, or that women should obey men, or that women are faulty and need correction, or that women can't control themselves without a man's firm hand, or that women are entities that feel rather than think, and that if women recognised that and stopped over-analysing everything and were more in touch with themselves as feeling beings and left the thinking and decision-making to their man instead, relationships would be a lot better.

You might read all sorts of distasteful stuff that seems to confirm that the men involved are utter jerks, that the women are down-trodden doormats, or indeed obnoxious brats, or that many posters are in serious need of psychiatric help. You might read material that gives you grave concerns that women are being enslaved, abused, raped, and mistreated in all manner of ways. You might think that people on this site are engaging in non-consensual actions, and that they should be

brought to justice. You might conclude that this is a dangerous and nasty web site that ought not to exist.

If you are uneasy about what you read on the site, please take a deep breath and remember that the underlying purpose of all of this alarming-sounding behaviour is *to create and maintain in the long-term an exciting, vibrant, connected, evolvable relationship that deeply satisfies both persons*.

It is so easy to read posts as they are written and then feel appalled. Posters rarely state explicitly that they are excited by whatever ghastly-sounding idea they seem to be expressing. Some do not even know themselves that they would not be saying this stuff or doing these things if they were not on a deep level thrilled by it. If we insisted that male posters acknowledge that it turns them on to think of (for example) punishing their wife because she is faulty and needs a firm hand, or if we insisted that female posters acknowledge that (for example) the idea that they are out-of-control or otherwise in need of correction or control is a total turn-on to them, that would immediately spoil it for them. The insistence that it is not a sexual thing is functional in their psychology. For some, without that conviction that everything they are saying (no matter how egregious) is true and the real reason for their actions, the whole thrilling dynamic would crumble. Some need to think of what they are doing as non-consensual, even though, in reality, ultimately, in substance as opposed

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to the mere form, it is very much consensual.

I must admit that I myself have often made the mistake of taking the overt form for the underlying substance when reading posts on Taken In Hand and elsewhere. I was once completely horrified to read a post (on a yahoo group I had just joined) from a woman who seemed to be extremely distressed because, she said, she was being treated abominably by her husband, and used and abused as a sexual slave, completely non-consensually. It sounded from her post as though she was genuinely terribly distressed. But when I read many more of the posts on that group, and including many more by the woman herself, I realised that I had been worried for nothing. The more I read, the more it became clear that she was completely thrilled by her marriage, and by the ghastly-sounding things her husband was doing to her and requiring of her. He was giving her exactly what she wanted! Her apparent distress was all part of the thrill for her. She was not in the slightest bit harmed by any of it. She was not actually distressed—not on a deep level, anyway—she was wildly turned on. For her and her husband, this dynamic, with its abusive-seeming form, was precisely what connected them and excited their passion for each other and kept their marriage a delight for both parties.

If something you read worries you, like I was worried by the post I mentioned above, instead of concluding that highly immoral, non-consensual, abusive things are happening in Taken In Hand homes, try

to remember that we really are all unique individuals with different preferences, and that others would not like what you yourself like in a relationship.

Keep in mind that however bad what you are reading sounds, this is what the writer and his or her spouse are into—this is how they connect—this thrills them—this is a way that those particular individuals create and maintain a terrific relationship, and that this is so no matter how revolted/disgusted/appalled/outraged you yourself are by what you read.

If that fails, why not simply ask a few calm, polite questions to try to test your conjecture that bad things are happening? For example, one way to check whether a woman is being abused in reality might be to try to find out whether she would actually choose to be in a relationship without those features if she could. Would she, for example, press a magic button that would turn her husband into a conventional man who prefers an egalitarian relationship without any thrashing? Would she *really* prefer that? When someone criticises her husband, does she sound genuinely down-trodden or make excuses for him like a battered wife sometimes does, or is the form of her defence more like: "How dare you say that! My husband is a total GOD! I'd never even *think* of leaving him, and if you shame him out of what he's doing to me, you *won't* be doing me any favours, so go away and stop trying to change my husband. I want him exactly the way he is!"? Asking a few questions can make it clear that the woman is

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not *at all* in the same state of mind as an abused woman.

It it helps, think of a person as having an inner, core self, plus a surface self, or selves on different levels or in different parts of the person's mind. Real non-consent, real rape, real abuse, etc., all affect the person's inner/core self. These things violate the person at her heart. This is very harmful and wrong.

Conversely, consensual non-consent, rape that the woman wants,* "abuse" that the woman wants, etc., do not violate the person's core self, they are more superficial, or affect only a proportion of the person's mind rather than being an uncontrolled total violation of her core being.

The person is rendering "abuse" in part of her mind, and her core self is thrilled by the "abuse" rather than being harmed by it, as explained in this article.[†] She might use this kind of dynamic to learn how to deal with scary situations, or it might simply be an extremely enjoyable and sexually exciting thing for her. It might be part of how that particular woman and her husband connect and grow closer. The point is that it is a good thing, despite how bad it sounds.

So when something you read alarms or appals you, keep in mind that you may be looking at the mere form, when the reality of the underlying substance is very different.

At this point, some readers will be asserting vociferously that if the form is different from the substance, that means that this is all one big game. Well, if it helps you not to get upset by the form, see it that way if you want to. But that is not how Taken In Hand folk experience what they are doing. It doesn't really matter either way. Whatever it is, the important thing is that both individuals want what is happening in their relationship, and for these individuals, what they are doing brings them together and makes their relationship an endless source of interest, excitement, good feelings and connection between them.²⁵⁰

"IS TAKEN IN HAND CONTROL REAL?" (5 JUNE 2006)

It is sometimes erroneously suggested that Taken In Hand relationships do not involve real control, merely men pretending that they are in control, or that Taken In Hand control is merely a matter of playing games or amateur dramatics.

Male authority in a Taken In Hand relationship exerts erotic control over sexual activities and many or most of life's other decisions. Does that make what we do a game? No!

There can be nothing more real than a Taken In Hand relationship. Indeed it is more real than virtually any form of a BDSM relationship because it is entirely sustainable. No one "gets into character" to play anything, and then reverts to something else. So there are no "amateur dramatics."

* "She wants to be taken in hand against her will?!" 2 January 2004.

† "She wants to be taken in hand against her will?!" 2 January 2004.

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Instead, our control infuses life with eroticism. And we strive to make both parties happy, indeed we eroticize and then resolve conflict with lovemaking. So our lives revolve around our relationship and its intensity.

We are fully present to each other.²⁵¹

"UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT" (6 JUNE 2006)

One sleepless night, in the middle of March, an unwelcome thought popped into my head. "Am I manipulative?" I pride myself on my honesty and integrity and yet, I had to admit, I regularly manipulate my husband to get what I want. I got up and spent the rest of the night writing my husband a letter of apology for all the wrong-doings that I could remember. It was a long letter! Writing was therapeutic.

Later that day I asked J. if I could read the letter to him. He's used to my letters pointing out his faults so he was a little wary! Reading it aloud made me feel horribly exposed and ashamed. J. was brilliant though and thanked me for my honesty. After 15 years of marriage I finally felt able to commit. I asked him to stop being so tolerant if my behaviour upset him in future.

A few weeks later, I found the Taken in Hand website quite by chance. It was like finding the answer to a question that I'd not yet thought to ask! I emailed J. a couple of pages and instantly regretted it ... I shouldn't have worried because, as usual, he was open-minded.

Two weeks have passed by and my husband is loving taking me in hand and I'm enjoying being taken! I'm sometimes impatient but J. is well and truly in control, making logical, considered changes where change is needed. I suggested about 56 rules, which amused him. He has established four rules: Respect, trust, love and care for each other.

For me the biggest changes are making sure that I greet him properly when he comes in from work and give him a cup of tea and time to chill. I am managing to stop myself making sarcastic, critical or unconstructive comments. I try very hard to obey him. I make myself available to him for sex (way easier than I thought this would be!). I feel so much more contented with my husband in charge.

J is enjoying his new role as head of the household. I can see now how much my nagging, negative comments and controlling held him back. He's still the same caring man and he still listens to my opinions but he makes the final decisions now. His decisions are sometimes different to what I wanted, but different can be good and take you to new places. He's a hundred times firmer with me and I respect him so much more now that I know he's going to stand firm. Disagreements don't spiral out of control, because I get spanked before they do! He cares for me by sending me to bed when he can see that I'm tired, he limits my time on the internet and restricts my TV viewing. He's put me on a budget; I'm still involved in financial decisions but he manages it. He opens and closes the car door for

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me—so chivalrous—such a simple gesture but he makes me feel special.

It's early days I know, but our previously good marriage feels refreshed, more sexually charged and fun. I just love my new manager so much!²⁵²

"A FEW THOUGHTS ON CRYING" (8 JUNE 2006)

Women need to cry when spanked. It is a normal, natural, and healthy release of tensions. Still, for a variety of reasons, women sometimes fail to cry when spanked.

One common cause is the failure of men to understand that their hand is seldom a match for a woman's buttocks. Most women have more than ample padding.

Possible solutions include rapidly switching the back of the thighs, or spanking the buttocks repeatedly—perhaps over the course of a week-end.

By nature, women need to test a man's resolve. It is a necessary self-protection mechanism that men often fail to appreciate.

Although uncomfortable for most women to initially discuss with a man, men need to understand that a woman's crying in the context of a spanking originates from her inner child. This is why women often exhibit other childlike responses to spanking or the threat of a spanking.

Consequently, it is important for the man to provide for a safe environment for a woman's inner child. Among the prime prerequisites for most women—when they lose both their pants and their composure—

are privacy in selection of location and discretion on the part of a man.

The long-term payoff for the discreet man is a very stable, happy, and contented life partner—purged of debilitating emotional baggage. The woman's trust of the man is paramount and should not be underestimated under any circumstances. If she cannot trust, she can never feel loved.

In the absence of trust, a woman will "circle the wagons"—to use an American colloquialism—and protect her inner child with all the maternal instincts she can muster. This protective strategy starts a vicious cycle that will eventually turn the woman into a spiteful hollow shell with which no one wants to live—least of all the woman herself. Her life stalls in bitterness.

At the same time, many modern women think themselves mentally tougher than men. By training, and occasionally by disposition, women are sometimes able to prove themselves superior.

Many times a woman's psychological stiffness is calculated to unnerve the man. Nevertheless, women tend to choose men they believe able to handle them.

Nevertheless, apart from testing and provocation, the real problem can be more deeply seated.

These problems prove difficult to resolve because most men fail to realize that spanking is about a woman's head rather than her buttocks.

The link between spanking and crying is not dissimilar from sex and orgasm. Sometimes a woman has to

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get her ducks in a row to experience either.

Unlike human males, the female orgasm seldom *just happens* because the plumbing is appropriately hooked up and the itch is scratched. Ambiance, mood, timing, and so forth are all important for setting the stage for grand finale.

The same is true when it comes to spanking. Simply beating her buttocks is much like flogging the proverbial dead horse. It is like squeezing the trigger of an empty double-action revolver.

The cylinder rotates; the hammer falls. Yet, there is no BANG in the end because the chambers have not been loaded beforehand.

As with sex, sometimes the spanking needs to happen on the woman's schedule rather than according to the man's timetable. The time is not so much dictated by his convenience or her dictates as by her need.

There are times when a woman is more ready to cry than she is at other times. Guilt and stress are common prime movers. Some embarrassment over *having to take a spanking like a child* helps, but contrived humiliation can be counterproductive.

Sometimes a woman *needs* a spanking to straighten out her mind. These are the times when she is most vulnerable.

In addition, there may be secondary complications from previous experiences in the woman's life.

For example, if a woman learned to endure X number of spanks growing up, or only had to cry superficially to cause a parent to stop, she may try to outlast her husband. She

may have also been forbidden to cry when spanked as a child. These are learned responses that may have to be unlearned. Unlearning them takes time.

Likewise, if a woman has been spanked by too many men more interested in getting into her knickers than in straightening her out, she may have steeled herself emotionally. Again, this is a learned response that needs to be unlearned.

Usually, even if a woman suspects the origins of the difficulty, she may not tell her husband. Much like spanking, this is one of those things women expect men to figure out for themselves. Hence, the first task is to understand the woman sufficiently to understand her complexity.

The solution to all of the above is one man and one woman coming to an agreement over time.

He needs to understand her needs. This requires listening as well as empathy. To understand women, men need to read between the lines of their statement. Not only is her choice of words often important, what she leaves unsaid can speak volumes.

She needs to be assured that, no matter how awkward or unpleasant things become, he is not going to give up. The focus should be on the woman and the relationship.

There is likewise no substitute for communication beyond "Me Tarzan; you Jane!" Sometimes, a woman needs to talk out her problems—even if she is really trying to connive her way out of a spanking.

Often, even if a man has the last word on the matter, the woman needs to vent her emotions and feel-

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ings upfront. Then, once she has exhausted herself, her resistance is replaced by susceptibility to crying.

Nature tends to be helpful in these things. When a woman has to live with someone day in and day out, keeping up an impervious facade can become more difficult than if the relationship is more superficial and transient.

At some point, if they work together long enough, over time, two events are eventually going to coincide. She is going to need a spanking and she is going to need to cry at the same time.

Once her emotional dam is cracked, it becomes more difficult to repair than before she lost her composure. A new pattern has been learned.

At this point, a word of caution is in order. The woman who re-establishes her stoic nature has lost her trust. A man needs to examine himself to discover what *he* may have done to contribute to her emotional u-turn and remedy the situation.

As with many areas of marriage, the mistake the man needs to avoid at all times is expecting too much too soon and giving too little too late. Patience will be rewarded if the man takes the time to understand and has the determination to follow through.²⁵³

“DOES SHE WANT A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP?” (11 JUNE 2006)

Imagine a Taken in Hand relationship. A relationship where the man leads without doubt and the woman

follows without complaint. Imagine the perfect couple. But that would not be imagining, it would be fantasy. There are no perfect couples, there is no such thing as “without complaint”, no such thing as “without doubt”. If we are to imagine, we should imagine the struggle to create a couple, not the perfect one. If we do that, then we’ll be prepared to fight our way through the hard parts and achieve imperfect perfection.

So let’s imagine. First, you have to find a woman amenable to being taken in hand. I can’t claim to have the answers. But you have to test. Now, I don’t mean, toss her across your lap and give her a sound spanking. That’ll probably just spook her, no matter how much she longs to be taken. Even if she’s not offended, all it tells you is that she is into spanking. No, you have to use a bit of discretion.

Perhaps the comments will expand on this, but I’ve found that subtlety is best. Start with always looking after her. I believe they call it being a gentleman. Open doors, seeing her in and out of the car, calling to ensure she’s gotten home okay, things like that. I know what you’re thinking: that’s normal, how does that test her? Well, we’re dealing with a real live person; it’s not what you do, but how she reacts. It’s likely she’ll resist overtly, protesting she can do for herself, but if you watch her, she could be self-conscious, embarrassed. This will betray her, revealing that these acts mean more to her than just kindness. That these small actions touch her beneath the surface. Notice I said watch her. It’s

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likely that she'll not even be aware of her actions.

So now you know there's something there. You escalate. You make incursions into her personal space. I'm not talking about kissing or petting. Sexual escalation is normal but our cause is more encompassing. Your incursions should be intimate but non-sexual. Lightly placing your hand on the small of her back or hip as you walk along. Withdraw it when she shrugs it off. She is just reacting to your invasion of her space. Wait a while then replace your hand. She will likely come to trust you and allow herself to be subjected to your touch. It is important that your touch be light. She should not feel you are controlling her, only that you could if you so chose. Slowly, you insinuate yourself until she grows comfortable with your presence. And, most importantly, she learns to trust your presence, your actions, your touch. Trust that no matter how confused or unsure she might become, and no matter how apprehensive of what is happening she might feel, she always knows she's safe.

It's the little things that matter. When you are with her, make her aware of your presence. When you hold her or kiss her, your actions should communicate that it is your right to hold or kiss her. Do not be tentative, do not seek permission, do not leave room for negotiation. She should always have a choice but not control. Her choice should be between surrendering or not. Like dancing together, she can choose to follow or stop dancing but she cannot lead. As this dance progresses,

invite her to a new step but expect there to be a stumble. Simply return to the comfort zone for a few measures then try again. Repeat until your lead takes her effortlessly to a higher comfort zone.

Of course this is just imagination, in reality you have to be flexible to exploit opportunities and overcome adversities. There is also the reality that she may not wish to be taken in hand.

There are many articles here on being in a Taken In Hand relationship, especially for the woman. I would be interested in the thoughts of others as to how you capture her in the first place.²⁵⁴

"SUPERFICIALLY NON-CONSENSUAL BUT DEEPLY CONSENSUAL" (12 JUNE 2006)

People need to think of time-frames before they simplistically equate "non-consent" in some form with "abuse". My wife consents to DD in her long-term, wisest, mind. Since DD sometimes involves me dominating her, forcing her to behave differently than she wishes at the time and/or punishing her when she is utterly opposed to the idea, DD is not always fully consensual in the short-term. Overall, despite some short-term regrets and struggles, in the long-term she really values and appreciates my dominance and disciplinary care.

DD which the recipient could wriggle out of at any time would be a sham.

Likewise most people who, in the fullest sense, "like" being spanked wouldn't be very interested in it if at

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the time of the spanking they were not suffering pain and regret or if their pleas to stop it were heeded.

Likewise a roller-coaster, which is long-term consensual but short-term non-consensual. Good roller coasters and good DD are very safe and have all sorts of unique benefits which arise directly from their forceful, safe, exciting and/or beneficial short-term domination.²⁵⁵

"BACK IN THE SWING OF THINGS" (20 JUNE 2006)

Yesterday was Fathers' Day and the kids had a wonderful time shopping and making a wonderful dinner for their dad. My back was hurting and I was grateful that I could just rest and not create dinner as I usually do. I enjoy cooking but was glad the kids took on this festive event. When it was over everyone went their separate ways and my husband and I went to pick up our youngest from her job. She is learning to drive and she asked her dad if she could drive home and she was allowed to do so. I was feeling rather irritated because I just wanted to go home but I got into the back seat so I wouldn't tell her how to drive (famous last words). So I wouldn't come unglued if something went wrong. My husband is much better at remaining calm during this activity.

We arrived at a terribly congested intersection which was rather tricky and she was attempting a left turn when all of a sudden a car was coming towards us. That was it I couldn't do it anymore as the car ap-

proached I yelled out for her to stop and my husband told her it was ok that she could go. Well....I disagreed and said so. In his voice I picked up a familiar tone as he spoke with me but I blew it off.

Things seemed to go back to normal and when we arrived home I decided to lie down for a bit. My husband was sitting on the bed when he stuck his hand out for me to stop walking and he told to me that we had some business to take care of. He told me to bend over and I am like what? for what? He explained that it was because I was arguing with him in the car. I couldn't argue that point but I tried to get out of the spanking as I had felt poorly. He told me that he would help me forget about how I was feeling then I ended up over his knee.

He used his new implement, which is a wooden ruler, and I detest that thing. I wiggle around a lot as it hurts. He has remained firm with me and isn't allowing me to get overly stressed about things these days which I can do quite easily and I respect him for not giving in to me and for carrying on as he feels he should.

It was a couple of months in which he didn't spank me and that was difficult for me. I would ask him and he didn't know why but after discussing it and he read several of the Taken In Hand articles he is back in full swing. But what I really like is that he is in control and nothing is getting by him. Looking at his new implement it seems quite tame but it isn't it makes quite an impact on me and

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I appreciate the result even though I hate the pain. I appreciate his control and his love for me. I look at the time without spanking as a learning time for both of us for me it was a frustrating journey but he has a good grasp on what it means to him and to me and he handles me without hesitation and with confidence. What a journey!²⁵⁶

"A SMILE MAN" (25 JUNE 2006)

Someone the other day asked me "what catches your eye about a woman?" Judging by my company, a divorced broker in his mid-fifties, I knew the question was something along the lines of "what part of the female anatomy is most interesting to you." I thought for a moment and answered "a smile." He looked at me, puzzled, and then rephrased the question. "OK" are you a "T" man or an "A" man?" I looked at him again and answered "I'm a "smile" man." Without sounding like a hypocritical liar who tries to feign some false example of chivalry with the old "looks don't matter" mantra, a smile on a woman goes a long way for me.

Happy people, male or female, smile when content. And some women are honest enough to admit that they like a man who is in control. Well, I'm not "controlling" but I do demand order and without someone being the final say in a home, there is no direction, no authority... no large, loving and slightly scary male to keep the rest of the family from going at one another. So, if a woman wanted me in charge,

if she wanted me to enforce that authority physically, if that would make her happy and content, I would be that man. If that would give her a smile, it would be my honor to spank her from time to time... whenever she needed it.

A happy, content, secure woman in love always looks good in a smile... and nothing else whenever possible...²⁵⁷

"NOSTALGIC? NOT A BIT!" (28 JUNE 2006)

It's sometimes suggested, not only by our critics but also by avid Taken in Hand fanatics, that what we're about is a return to the pre-feminist past. And it's true that lots of us are attracted by misty fantasies about the 1950s, when men wore suits, not soccer shirts, and women wore stockings, not ski pants. In fact, a 'fifties fetish isn't even confined to us here: I once dated a woman I met her on a BDSM site who, explaining what kind of relationship she was after, told me she wanted to be "a 'fifties wife". It's no surprise, of course—there are books from that period about how a housewife should behave for instance, that make us feel as though we'd be very at home back then. But, as an unapologetically pro-feminist dominant man, it seems to me that we're mistaken if we really believe any of this has anything to do with the real 1950s.

I think it's tremendous fun to brace and button up in an old suit, and I love my date to wear a vintage frock. But I for one am sceptical

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about how great life would have been for me fifty years ago. Being unable to communicate with other men like me or with the women who like us, I doubt I'd have become conscious of my sexuality—I'd have known about my desires, yes, but almost certainly wouldn't have got beyond the stage of knowing something needed to be repressed. And how would I have met my wife? I might have got lucky and ended up with a lovely, submissive woman, but I don't think sexual or emotional fulfilment would have been likely, really. Sure, I'd have been the breadwinner and got a good deal on housework, but for me, like for many dominant men, there is a dark side to sexuality, and I have needs that many 'fifties wives—in an age that was unfriendly to homosexuality and no doubt to other unusual sexual practices—would have been simply horrified by!

When we talk about the 1950s, then, we're playing with ideas about the past, but self-consciously, as a kind of retro fetish—a fetish that's very much of our time, a time when we can be self-conscious as dominant men and submissive women, and can actually look for partners who know they need us.

If you really want to see how unlike the 1950s our world is, though, have a look through the posts here—how many of them are by women? I'd guess at least two thirds. Taken in Hand is largely about women understanding and accepting their own sexualities, and actively seeking satisfaction in their relationships. They're discussing women's feelings and needs, and in a sense are de-

manding and requiring men to live up to fulfilling those needs. Now, firstly that means that female sexuality is recognised and celebrated in a way that's only really been possible since the late 1960s; and secondly, that Taken in Hand is simply one more example—in fact, to my knowledge the clearest example—of women getting together and announcing to the world that they're dissatisfied with the ordinary sexual and emotional lives most women experience, and are looking for ways to get men to shape up and give them what they need. How pre-feminist is that? Not at all, in fact. This is the age in which women are standing up and shouting for what they want from men, and Taken in Hand is absolutely in the vanguard of that movement.

So there's nothing ironic about us knowing each other via the loveliest dot.com there is. No, no: this is the only suitably contemporary medium for such an exciting start-up enterprise. The Taken in Hand ideal is no nostalgic one. Our ideas aren't located anywhere near the 1950s: they're very 21st century indeed.²⁵⁸

"SHE WANTS HIM TO PREVAIL" (3 JULY 2006)

When one views an older movie where the man puts a woman over his knee, what is it about such a scene that excites the viewer, especially the female viewer? In a scene from one of my wife's favorite older films, "It Happened One Night", an exasperated Clark Gable grabs hold of the spoiled heiress, Claudette Col-

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bert, throws her over his shoulder and gives her a couple of good swats on her behind. For a woman who is used to getting her own way she is at first outraged, but eventually pleased that he would be so audacious to do such a thing. However, the viewer not only approves of Gable's action but also knows that the heiress, despite her pleas to the contrary, is thrilled to have a real man take her in hand. The scene is meant to be amusing, but cannot help but be titillating. I suppose one could argue this is simply a film, a piece of fantasy, not to be taken seriously. Yet, why do so many women enjoy these scenes of a real man conquering a woman? For the women who strongly desires to be taken in hand this scene has real meaning because the man did not ask permission, he did not need to be coached, and he acted decisively.

Consensual non-consent, an awkward term for what I believe to be an essential part of a taken in hand relationship, is what makes these scenes work and in real life makes a woman weak in the knees. For a woman, the power of a taken in hand relationship lies in her man's authority to take her in hand whenever he deems it necessary. It is a powerful moment for the woman, not only because the man has taken her in hand, but because it demonstrates his authority to sanction her behavior. The wife who is thrilled by her husband's authority, upon being told she needs a spanking, may protest her husband's "unfair" and audacious decision. While being spanked she may even plead for him to stop. However, the wise and ex-

perienced man ignores her pleas knowing that this is what she needs and is what she wants.

For those who have read here, or on other sites dedicated to taken in hand relationships, know there are many women who are trying to convince their husbands to take them in hand. Some of these women feel they need to "coach" their husbands in how it should be done. Unfortunately for some of these women they become increasingly frustrated because even though their husband might do as they request, it does not have that *je ne sais quois*. Why is this so? Simply put, if she is able to "control the control" it loses its power to move her" She needs to be conquered. She needs to know that despite her arguments and pleas to the contrary she *will* be taken in hand. She may battle against her man, but secretly, maybe even to herself, wants him to win. She needs to know he is really in charge. This is what makes such scenes in these films excite the viewer and excites the woman who is regularly taken in hand by her man. So despite it being an awkward term, consensual non-consent is an essential part of a taken in hand relationship.²⁵⁹

"TWO DIFFERENT WOMEN..." (4 JULY 2006)

Two young women were debating the other day over whether or not they should've waited until they were married to have sex (yeah, my ears perked up for that one...):

"If you must know, my husband and I were both virgins when we

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married, I was 20 and he was 26, almost 27. Now I'll be 33 next week and he'll be 40 in October and we're still married. And neither of us has cheated, either. And no, I do not feel like I'm missing out on anything."

At hearing this, another lady, single, piped in with "Whatever. Personally, I'd prefer someone who was confident in themselves and whose life I could share in and vice versa, without insecurity, D/s roles, and fundie stereotypes coming into play... I prefer not to be terminally barefoot and pregnant and chained to the stove."

I was shocked by the level of antagonism in the second one's statement. What's wrong with monogamy? When did self control and commitment become a bad thing? Should I consider myself cursed if I were to marry a woman who thought that it was one of her primary purposes in life to please me? And by reciprocation, I should only please her? To save and keep sacred that which holds the purpose of creating life to be between yourself and your spouse, is that a bad thing? I think it is beautiful. Even a cynical, divorced jerk like me finds that level of commitment commendable.

Two people can have a lifelong loving relationship without the "husband—king and master—wife—servant and baby-maker" mentality. I've seen it—I know it exists. Sometimes it is a bit depressing when I see a good couple because I would love to have had a marriage like that. But so many unmarried women these days think if they engage in a "give and take" relationship with a man that some-

how they're being a doormat and not being respected. Somewhere they have been taught that if a man has needs, or even demands, he doesn't appreciate them. In other words, from the time they were 12-14 years old, the boys were always being nice and trying to curry favor with the ladies. Courtship and dating is one thing; a committed relationship is entirely another.

Most of those women will go from relationship to relationship to relationship... and maybe a marriage or two and end their days angry and bitter and lonely. This too I have seen. Does the name Maureen Dowd ring a bell?²⁶⁰

"ARE MEN NECESSARY?, BY MAUREEN DOWD: A BOOK REVIEW" (9 JULY 2006)

I got *Are Men Necessary?*, by Maureen Dowd and read it, but I can't say I was wildly impressed. Considering this person is a Pulitzer Prize winner, I was expecting something better, sharper, wittier, something like a liberal Florence King perhaps. No such luck.

The book is mostly treading old ground. I've lost count of how many articles I've read about frustrated career women who can't get men, because men don't want women as successful as they are, they can't cope with intelligent, strong women, they want women who won't compete with them, so they marry secretaries, nurses etc (it doesn't apparently occur to Ms. Dowd that a woman may be a secretary or a nurse and yet have a glimmer of intelligence).

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The book goes over all the desperate advice given to women over the years on how to get a man, from 1950s guides to the arch outpourings of *Cosmopolitan*. Reading about all these desperate women, I reflect how extraordinary the lengths women will go to to entice men, adopting all sorts of desperate stratagems to appear more attractive, less intelligent, more seductive, or whatever. When I was young I liked men as well as the next woman, I wanted boyfriends, I wanted (eventually) to get married and have children. But it never occurred to me to DO anything about it. I mean, I just used to assume that either men were attracted to me or they weren't, either they wanted to marry me or they didn't, I never thought it was possible to influence them in any way, so I never tried.

Ms Dowd laments the modern fad for women to be wholly obsessed with their appearance, and to go to extraordinary lengths to augment their looks with plastic surgery etc, but she doesn't have any interesting insights into this, or any other, subject. The part about plastic surgery produces what I thought was the only really amusing line in the book. Discussing liposuction she writes, of the chairman of the Liposuction task force:

Liposuction task force? In the '50s, women vacuumed. Now women are vacuumed. Our Hoovers have turned on us!

The most interesting part of the book is where she discusses whether men are necessary from an evolu-

tionary point of view. Apparently it would be possible for women to do without men altogether, according to some scientists, or at least to get by with very few. I was struck by this arresting sentence:

Every time a man has sex, he makes enough sperm to fertilize every female in Europe.

Now that's food for thought.

Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky are discussed at length, and one of the most interesting passages in the book comes when Maureen Dowd comes face to face with Miss Lewinsky;

"Why did you write such scathing articles about me?", Miss Lewinsky asks her. "I don't know" Ms Dowd replies.

And I don't really know what this book is for: it doesn't seem to have anything very new or very interesting to say on any of the subjects discussed within its covers; it's all been gone over before.

I hope that the columns that won her the Pulitzer Prize were better than this.²⁶¹

"HOW I DISCOVERED WHAT I NEED" (10 JULY 2006)

I have been with my love for a little over a year now and we—and yes, I mean *we*—have decided that this type of relationship would work wonders for us. We have not had problems in the year other than a little crankiness from time to time on both of our parts. I am a very assertive female working in a very male-

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dominant field. I have to make sure that the men I work with never see a moment of weakness on my part, otherwise all respect is lost.

I am over 40 and I have spent my adult years wondering what was missing in my life, and never quite feeling whole and happy. I met this beloved man and we became friends quite quickly. Friendship became more and now we are together. The greatest thing that I would like to share here is this. My man mentioned this type of relationship to me almost immediately after we became intimate. I have always had a healthy sexual appetite and thought well maybe he is a little kinkier than the average Joe. We discussed and at the time it just didn't seem right for me. Oh my, how times have changed.

He saw in me what I needed. He actually took the time to look. No one in my past relationships ever took the time to see inside me... to look into my heart. He did. He requested that I write out what my rules would be and so I did. There are two things on my list that I would not be able to stand:

1. No hurting of each other's heart.
2. No other outside persons involved.

I can't tell you the relief and love I feel for my love. He has nurtured me for a year, allowing me to find for myself what it was I was needing. He gave that to me without pushing or demanding. He had seen what my needs were and knew that he had to be patient with me until I saw them as well. It just amazes me that He saw it long before I did.

I have given myself to him, body, mind and soul. He is the most loving man I have ever known and I am the luckiest woman in the world to have been able to cross paths with him.

One other thing, for those who have contributed to this site—thank you. Of course, like everyone else, I don't always agree with everything I read here, but I cannot express to you how much you have helped me understand that I am not a weirdo, freak, unstable or any other adjective you might want to hurl! Not that I had to have validation, but it is nice to know that there are others that are living and loving in a beautiful healthy relationship. I am 100% woman in love with a 100% man who, by the way, adores the ground I walk on but doesn't have one nanosecond's worth of trouble taking me in hand. Respecting him is mandated, not by his words demanding that I do so but....simply by his presence, actions and love.

I am so blessed.²⁶²

"WE WERE VIRGINS WHEN WE MARRIED" **(12 JULY 2006)**

My husband and I were both virgins when we married, and he was 30. That was seven years ago, and though it's definitely unusual these days, our decision to wait was not because of any defect in either of us.

My husband was deeply religious at the time. He always stated that he would never marry a woman who was not a virgin, and since he had that criteria for his future wife, he felt that it was only fair that he held himself to the same high standard.

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But he did date a lot, and his dates tried to seduce him quite often.

Neither one of us feel like we missed out on anything. Our mutual lack of experience took away some of the pressure, and what we didn't know, we've had fun learning together! :)²⁶³

"PLEASING YOUR MAN MAKES YOU FEEL MORE LOVEY AND LUSTY" (12 JULY 2006)

Trying to please your partner makes you feel more lovey/lusty. It is almost a bit girlish, to want to please and to feel rewarded by a "good girl" comment. Yet, it's true and it's ok.

I really think we sometimes complicate the simplicity of relationships. For example, years ago, the original post about being happy to cook and serve a man, would not have stirred a blink from anyone. Then it all became complicated and women developed thought patterns of "what's in it for me?"

Well, I'll say what is in it for women: it is that when you make a nice home for your man and love him, he is more apt to reward you positively.

At another place in time, long before the '50's, women worked and kept home. Everyone did what they needed to do. Today, housekeeping is so much simpler. Push buttons and wait for buzzers. And how hard is it to push a broom or vacuum?

So I think it is lovely when I hear of a woman wants to keep her house and cater to her man. She would likely not be doing it with such determined joy if she didn't get something out of it.²⁶⁴

"WHERE THESE MEN COME FROM..." (23 JULY 2006)

You've found a man that, in spite of past less-than-satisfying relationships with men, overcomes your opinion of the opposite sex. You've discovered that, unlike others, he is a man that meets the need that you've been searching for. And now you ask, "where did he come from?" You ask, "are they born, or are they made?"

The answer is, "YES!"

A man is neither born nor made. He is born male, then (hopefully) matures into what we know as a man. Not that all males turn into what society would describe as the prototypical male. And, more so, not that all men are the type of man that desires to lead his woman, care for her, direct her, and yes, even discipline her.

My point is this: that this dominant (takeninhand-type) man of yours that you have found (or, are searching for) was born with some combination of inherent likes, desires, skill sets and other components. One of those components was a desire for dominance in a heterosexual relationship. But, just like other skill-sets that a person is born with, this desire (I would call it a need) must be developed, and most importantly, combined with other learned behavior to make the package one that is truly cherished by his woman.

The same man that you so admire, while always having that dominant thread running throughout his soul,

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may have also been a cad, may have also been weak, may have also been cavalier about a woman's heart. But, time and experience have taught him. He has learned to look beyond his need to simply dominate by understanding the need that his woman has to be conquered, surrendered, and submissive. He has learned that this desire of hers to be dominated matches his own desire to dominate. Yet, he has learned that she cannot simply give it up. He must be worthy. He must understand. He must be intimate with her (not simply sexually intimate, for that is far too easy of a solution.)

No, he must KNOW her, and only then is she conquerable. In knowing her, he must also LOVE her and she must value his love for her. And, inherent in the act of love (again, not just sexual), is his desire to guide, protect and lead, making the best decisions for *them*.

Yes, he is born with a core. He is wired to dominate his woman. But, it is with time, mistakes, personal failures, and other obstacles that he is seasoned. When understanding, wisdom and maturity have fertilized this core—then you have the man. And this man is searching for his mate. For, as much as you ladies need this man for you, it is important to understand that not all women match up to him. And, when he has found his woman, she is cherished indeed!²⁶⁵

(This note is inspired by a brief comment of Louise [Culmer's] in the thread of "When rape is a gift": "Try and adopt the philosophy of the immortal Mrs Patrick Campbell, you know "I don't care what people do as long as they don't do it in the street and frighten the horses.""")

I have been blessed, mixedly, over recent years in intimate relationship with two strong, willful, resistant women with deep but largely unacknowledged desires to be taken in hand by a strong, loving man. Such women are so very hard to read that the issue of consensual non-consent is troublingly problematic. In both cases these were women capable of profound connection with animals, specifically horses and dogs. I wish to suggest that a [woman's] "guard dog" can provide a useful objective correlative for the ongoing state of openness, trust, and loving attachment in the romantic relation of man and woman; if you will, a rather reliable barometric reading of the intimate atmosphere.

Years ago I was fond of telling outrageous, frightening campfire stories to a warm, extended community of folks, dog lovers all, on a rural pond in New Hampshire. My niece in particular loved to be scared bejeebers. A sweet little mongrel dog named Brutus, who would howl when talk got animated—his way of asserting his role in the family pack—was in attendance on special story-telling evening. As I reached the thrilling climax to the story, approaching my niece all the while, arm extended in mock menacing manner, she let out a classic Lois Lane scream, and gentle Brutus,

"DON'T FRIGHTEN THE HORSES" (7 AUGUST 2006)

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suddenly fiercely protective of her, chomped down on my wrist – biting but not biting.

Children and dogs have rather exquisite intuition of the human heart and its intentions. Other than the evidence of the loving trust of a good woman, there are few experiences that surpass the feeling of so being seen, known, and understood than to be the playmate-uncle to a mischievous, energy-filled child or alpha to a spirited dog. I ride very high on the loving teasing and the mock-fighting. Is consensual non-consent any different from these implicit arrangements where nothing is stated and all is understood?

[I've] great admiration for the many women whose disclosures [I've] read on this site. Privacy, delicacy, modesty militate against exposure of the personal intimacies revealed in such pieces as "When rape is a gift" – these are matters that are the exclusive domain of the shared world of loving man and woman. "Like freedom feels where wild horses run" sings Elton John. When we let our own wild horses run and then talk about it we do indeed risk stampeding the rest of the herd. I feel gratitude that folks are willing to share their deepest heart publicly – it is deeply inspiring and encouraging to know that there are others who share our needs for full intimacy, passionate intensity, and release of our animal-human powers and energies – but there is as well a sense of shame, particularly for a man, and in the name of strong, loving, aggressive men, that women should feel so deeply unfulfilled in certain desires that they must so

explicitly open themselves to dopey public censure in giving away the keys to the candy store.

"An it harm none, do as ye will" summarizes well my own pagan, libertarian convictions. Clearly, many who participate on this site hold similar views. With this qualifier, perhaps "Harm" is not given primacy. We want the good stuff and we are more willing than some to assume certain risks in order to get it. Perhaps more shyly than football players or wrestlers, some women are proud to wear the inexplicable and certainly unintended bruises of strenuous, passionate bouts. One grows weary of insisting that this is not about harm or hurting. The overarching objection to this site is, I suspect, not so much the envy, spite, and malice of those with the puritan fear that someone, somewhere, is enjoying illicit delight, but that we talk about it in ways that cast aside the modern commandment of bullying, tame, egalitarian mediocrity that demands above all else that one shall not give offense and hurt another's feelings. To adapt common currency, why should taken in hand couples have 90% of the fun?

Though we may frighten some of the nanny-staters riding their ginned up panting and ranting hobby-horses I think we need not be concerned with their grievance mongering. There will always be those totalitarian mentalities to draw momentous metaphysical implications and "messages" from evidence of unconventional, private, consensual behavior. The personal and intimate is decidedly not the political; indeed,

at its best, it is largely primal, animal, carnal (oh yuck) and spontaneously pre-rational and non-discursive. It goes largely to explain why some of us with deep needs for intuitive, emotional connection so often have a sense of mammalian family that far outweighs phony-baloney family-of-man pieties.

Call me goofy but I love having a [woman's] protective dog in attendance at the primal scene. They do indeed get stirred up, but they do not bite. And nothing is more telling than a woman in the throes of passionate resistance (when she is, so to speak, the piece de resistance of a lovely encounter) who reassures her dog that all is well. Thus, children fully absorbed in playing street stickball, using eyes in the back of their head, unfailingly dodge the cars.

To deny that we can know against knowing and consent without consenting is to ignore important dimensions of full, rich, living human reality.

I'd like to close with a kind of friendly toast to both the more traditional taken in hand women, those whose male counterpart both insists they keep after the household chores and sees to their erotic gratification (one might say, he makes you both mop and glow), and to all those radiantly willful, resistant, tempting, spitfires: To those blissful moments when men get hard and women melt (and with a nod to Nina Simone), here's to some steam on your clothes and a little sugar in your bowl.

Bottoms up!²⁶⁶

"IT'S NOT REALLY NATURAL FOR EITHER OF US" (8 AUGUST 2006)

My husband is not what some might call "naturally dominant". What I have determined, however, is that a non-naturally dominant husband can successfully lead a taken in hand relationship, albeit with greater effort. No, I have not found that he changes in to a ["naturally"] dominant, as it would negate the whole meaning of natural, [wouldn't] it. Nor does he necessarily allow long dormant dominant abilities to finally rise to the surface (although my husband did grow up in a very liberal New England college town which could suppress any [man's] dominant tendencies).

From what I've seen, with the support of his wife unreservedly offering her submission, he can work to develop leadership skills which can flourish in that environment. I am outgoing and a natural leader in many situations and my husband, who is shy by nature, has often tended to lean toward the assistant role.

That said, when we tweak those dynamics by suppressing what seems to us to be natural and he rises to the occasion to confidently take the lead and I humbly step back and follow, there are sparks that fly, the good kind. We both like the results. They are challenging for both of us to arrive at but when he is firm with me, with added disciplinary consequences and I am wholly submissive to him, there is a hard-to-put-my-finger-on connection we

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seem to achieve and that I have read so much about here.

My point is that neither of us seems to arrive at Taken In Hand naturally, depending on your point of view. Nevertheless, the end justify the means for us, making the effort worth it.²⁶⁷

"GETTING YOUR ROCKS OFF" (9 AUGUST 2006)

Though I've seen allusions on this site to Ayn Rand's fiction, most notably to *The Fountainhead*, I've been surprised that no one has mentioned this work on this thread of responses to the boss's post, for this novel features a progression of violent psycho-emotional encounters between hero and heroine leading to a bout of rough sex in which an alpha laborer in a granite quarry, thoroughly provoked by the taunting of the heiress daughter of the quarry's owner, takes her by force in an act of scornful possession that gives her, against all resistance, total rapture (Golly, do they get their rocks off! — c'est bien le cas de le dire) — perhaps the classic scenario of consensual non-consent. A careful analysis of the text confirms the novelist's own pithy synopsis: "rape by engraved invitation."

The between-the-lines invitation engraved in the passages that precipitate this climactic scene electrifies the narrative with a sub-textual undercurrent of sexuality, of desire, of resistance — conveyed in large part by the heroine's powerfully charged hand fetishism. Yummy. How curious that those so exquisite-

ly sensitive to the silent signaling of sexual harassment remain lamely clueless in the face of innuendo, implication, and body language that conveys seduction and consent: this scene drives gender feminists up the wall, as, of course, does Rand herself (cf. *Feminist Interpretations of Ayn Rand*. Wendy McElroy's analysis nicely counters the deconstructionist readings).

Sexual teasing is grand, but dangerous, fun. The woman has been warned she is playing with fire yet does not, cannot, leave off. A few days prior to the "rape" she, mounted on horseback, slashes him across the face with a switch — opening the door to personal "violence" and the retaliation she fears but desires. Let's call a spade a spade: she's asking for it; more deliciously, she is begging for it.

This is not to suggest that Rand is endorsing for all of womankind the classic prescription in answer to that hoary question "What do women want?" ("Penis naturalis dosim repetatur!" though your Latin be rusty, I'm sure you'll catch the thrust) but there is ample evidence in her writings that she knew, physician heal thyself, what personal emptiness needed filling.

Cautions apply (duh!). Testosterone is powerful stuff. The counsel of prudence and vigilance may be conservative, but nevertheless worth conserving. Whether it is a man setting himself up for temptation, or a woman risking, unchaperoned, the company of males, it is downright foolish and reckless to ignore the dangers, in Pollyannaish belief that living dynamics are always "safe,

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sane, and consensual". Evolutionary Nature does not play by those rules. Men are biological creatures "designed" for hunting, fighting, and rough-house aggression (physically, intellectually, sexually): mankind would have long ago perished without the achievements, creations, and pregnancies driven by these impulses. To deny, evade, or seek to "rewrite" male nature, male "predation", male selfishness (pimping for wimps by drugging boys with Ritalin (cf. Christina Hoff Summers: *Who Stole Feminism?*, *The War Against Boys*) or raising their consciousness with gender feminist pietistic colonialism (aka bullying) driven by those, of all people, who should know better.

I am particularly appalled by the current "raunch" fashion statements made by young girls (cf. Ariel Levy: *Female Chauvinist Pigs*)—innocent little girls revealing grown-up women's bodies are decidedly not safe and male lust is a dark, dangerous force of nature, not subject to regulation and legislation (cf. Camille Paglia: *Vamps and Tramps*). Parading renal dimples is not quite the same thing as showing the facial ones: these girls need to be educated to the dynamics of enticement and seduction.

Especially in this time of foolishness and charges of "date rape", the new coinage for what is often no more than reckless regrets (cf. Wendy McElroy and Camille Paglia's essays and Katie Roiphe: *The Morning After: Sex, Fear, and Feminism on Campus*), it falls upon an "aggressive" man, as a matter of ethics

and consensual choice, to make clear upfront to a woman in his care that it is not in his nature to ask permissions (to do so runs totally counter to what he wants from the experience). Likewise, if such is her preference, a woman should make utterly clear to him that her terms are explicit consent, parting company if need be.

That said as background and bedrock to whatever the relation might become, I think the terms of in-line, on-going personal dynamics are quite different (and I can already hear the howls of the explicit consent, hoot owl gals). In sailboat racing there is a term for a forceful run at the starting line: barging. If you ask, silly boy, you give her a chance to say No! If such is her mind, she'll find the word on her own. How better to break the spell of smoldering heat and rising passion than to ask in genteel and gentlemanly fashion "Do you want to make love?" (Now that's artful seduction! It might well inspire the reply "Do you want to call me a cab?"), and what's more, it dishonestly cloaks in a simpering euphemism what is generally a much starker reality. An honest and direct approach would be to tell her you're going to (in the oft-used tender cliché of my still beloved ex-wife) ... her brains out, but that will be evident to her in your eyes. Some women don't need everything spelled out; they are good at reading between the lines and drawing out the implications of words and behavior. I think a woman's working assumption should be that a man is a potential rapist and that given his druthers he would indeed, as a mat-

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ter of rather constant protocol, simply ravish her whenever and however he wanted. (How's that for a delicious statement to be torn out of context?)

That is not to say that men cannot be civilized—clearly they are and, to all appearances, much too much so. One does not notice bannered on the covers of the pop relationship magazines how-to articles on dampening masculine desire and cooling male ardor. Look at what sells women: ravishment romance. The inner fear of a woman is not the danger of her man's overwhelming desire and passion for her; it is rather the despair at the thought of never inspiring and inflaming that sort of heat.

In this ambivalent, conflicted, hyper-provocative yet desensitized culture mixed signals abound: "Go for it." "Just do it"—but not that! The "sell" is spontaneity, daring impulse, grand adventure—the reality is the lame, juiceless, lifeless conventions, rules, and regulations of the maternalistic nanny state. It is hardly surprising that those vulnerable to cultural "conditioning" introject memes contrary to earthy realities best taught and learned, not in the classroom (Yikes!), but in the cloistered setting of mossy woods and airy haylofts, hidden from the patrolling eyes of school-marms and intrusive parents. Let me betray my years with this foolish question: don't kids, anymore, strip for oranges and baseball cards, play doctor, and tease each other in games of Trust Me?

There is a fierce, ruthless, severe side to aroused alpha masculinity where the pilot light, never extin-

guished, of caring concern and sensitivity (where he can recognize an authentic and necessary No), and benevolent intention to do no harm goes very much background. Its equivalent in femininity is reached at that point where she does not want tenderness and consideration. The entreaties say it all (a nasally congested bibliophile might say, the do me! decibels of her passion) and even non-believers become oh-god-ists—she wants to be used as the object of his desire and lust and revels in his forceful intensity. This is an exquisite treat for a man, to just let it rip. In no other context can he so intensely cash-in and celebrate his self-trust, self-confidence, and self-possession.

No doubt a major aspect of the appeal of pornography to men is that it liberates in fantasy those impulses. Some of us want it for real. (In this regard I consider Camille Paglia's characterization of pornography as the elevation of woman "to high priestess of a pagan paradise garden" very apt, as contrasted with the prevailing wisdom that sees here the breeding ground for abuse, degradation, humiliation, and subjugation of women). While men can perhaps more easily treat this as a purely animal transaction and indulge more promiscuously, single women are not immune to this sort of impulse and at times seek out studs good for a MoveOn.Org. There are indeed many fish in the sea and women are hardly exempt from using "keeper" and "throwback" language. To select one, exclusively, is monumentally exceptional. For an "active" man to surrender that need to one woman is

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a huge gift. (Male surrender to his need for his woman has an oddly aggressive and active aspect but is nevertheless surrender: surrender to his own raw male animal nature and his daring to let go of his “civilized” dimensions). It is refreshing, on this site, to hear testimony of women who recognize those same dimensions within.²⁶⁸

“HOW DOES SHE RESPOND TO SUSTAINED EYE CONTACT?” (16 AUGUST 2006)

Recently, an article appeared on this site regarding how to tell if a woman would like to be controlled. I have an observation that I think is foolproof and not for the faint of heart.

Let’s say your initial screening hints that a particular woman might like to be controlled. If the eyes are the windows to the soul, then such a woman looking into the eyes of a take-charge man should feel a “*Je nais se quoi*” connection. The trick is for the man to establish eye contact and hold it for more than a beat or two and to give her a subtle opportunity to acknowledge her nature quietly to him. Sustained eye contact is defined as that condition where a suitable woman becomes either fully engaged for an uncomfortable length of time or she has to look away because of rising discomfort. Between a take-charge man and a woman desiring a man’s control, sustained eye contact will generally register complementary personality on a nonverbal level.

A person’s frank gaze has weight and muscularity. You remember

them, the stern catholic school nun who commanded you to look into her eyes to see if you were trying to lie; the steel-eyed used car salesman; the ultra-benevolent fundraiser, the soft-spoken teacher who teaches all the troubled kids and never raises his voice or have problem that would send other teachers into retirement. These are all people who seem to possess some innate ability to make us move in ways that belie our original intent—be it to lie about not doing homework; to make an untimely car purchase; or to write a check for \$200.00 when a determination had been made not to contribute a dollar above \$10. For all intents and purposes, these people might not possess a dominant bone in their bodies, but they possess a skill of maintaining eye contact until you flinch out of sheer discomfort, heading towards terror. You are suggestible in their presence because they look into your being and see what is obscured from the casual observer. They appear to have the ability to see the fake, the phoney. It’s like going to confession.

To the right kind of woman, sustained eye contact sends an unequivocal message of acknowledgment, connection, attention and empathy. It says: I am feeling you emotionally, looking into your eyes to hear what your lips have no reason to convey—to cause you to drop the guard that separates strangers.

Two important observations:

One, eye contact is not the same thing as staring. No woman responds positively to a stare, be it one filled with antagonism or one of mindless indifference. But, sustained

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eye contain in the hands of a take-charge man yields instant dividends. It registers your emotional presence; it demands attention, and it hints to a wellspring of control flowing just beneath the surface.

Two, if there is more than a generation of difference in age, then the woman's apparently positive response could just be a desire to be deferential to one's elders. So you need to be close in age for this to give you the information that the woman responds positively to control.

Sustained eye contact takes practice, but once you realize that you can cut through the exterior and touch people in a way that, quite literally, forces them to deal with you in a more courteous, expeditious, and subservient manner, your dominant presence is maximized. And for a true dominant male, dominance gained is tough to relinquish.

As I said, sustained eye contact is not for the faint of heart; but shouldn't a dominant man's personality be able to initiate and handle this level of communication. If not, perhaps his dominance is contrived and only aimed at the self professed, such as those who register as submissive women in obvious places.²⁶⁹

"THIS PLACE IN MY LIFE FEELS RIGHT" (29 AUGUST 2006)

I am an independent woman and have wanted my own way many times. In the beginning of our taken in hand relationship it wasn't easy to just hand over control to my husband because most of my life I have

been a person who seems to need the control and for us this has been a process: we didn't just arrive at any particular destination.

I have recently gone into business for myself and am in charge once again new career and totally different line of work but again it places me on the frontline of leadership. I am noticing that my attitude has changed some from being at home this past year. I am getting back into working and need to reel myself in and focus on the fact that when I'm at home my husband is in charge not me. He is a born leader but that does not make me feel lesser than he, nor does it make me feel that I have lost my independence.

I am at a place in my life where I enjoy his ability to take charge and this has taken my willingness to let go of the control and even submit to him in certain instances.

For a long time I was controlling everything in my life so much that it became a huge stress and I went overboard with too much busyness and creating a health issue for myself. Since that time my husband has not allowed to me become too stressed over anything. This time I have to move slower and really think about what I am doing and realize that if I get out of control he will tug on my reins to get my attention. He is good at that.

Learning to submit to one's spouse's control is not easy in the beginning; at least, it is not easy not for me, but it has been one of the most satisfying and comforting things in my life. It is not a natural course but a process.²⁷⁰

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"STRAP-ON EPIPHANY, BY VIRGINIA VITZTHUM: A COMMENT" (1 SEPTEMBER 2006)

I just came across this article at Salon.com:

"Strap-on Epiphany", by Virginia Vitzthum 1999 January 28

"In becoming the penetrator, a woman learns to see sex—and the world—through male eyes"

Personally, I find this story quite amusing (although I'm also put off by the whole strap-on thing) and it also seems relevant to the correlation of masculine/feminine duality with dominance/submissive themes, as they are often raised here at Taken In Hand.

In summary: a conventional heterosexual woman likes men and sex, but cannot see anything at all "dominant" about the male sex role, nor anything "submissive" about the female role; she considers such stereotypes outside the pale of proper feminist thinking.

She's a "tomboy-turned-feminist" who has "always resisted the notion that being a woman means being submissive" and who says "I want to move through the world as the subject, not the object...yet I never minded being the girl in bed."

Well, I find it curious that anyone would equate being sexually submissive with being an "object" rather than a "subject." Why should we consider the dominant partner to be more the subject than the submissive one? I consider myself very much both subject and sexually submissive. Indeed, I would argue that the male fits the role of sex ob-

ject much more naturally, because throughout most of nature it's generally the male of the species who flaunts his flashy colors to lure the females.

(I would also argue that being a sex object carries with it an aura of power that comes from being able to entice and tease the opposite sex to an arousal that they may be unable to resist; and that that sort of power can be yet another "weapon" in the hands of a dominant male who knows how to use it.)

But that issue will have to be left for another time, because the main point here is that the author's viewpoint on the power dynamics of intercourse undergoes a radical and virtually instantaneous change, with the help of a plastic appendage.

The critical event happens when the author's boyfriend/sex-buddy asks her to don a strap-on plastic dildo, and pretend to screw him. (I say "pretend" because it's not really screwing. That would involve a real penis.)

She obliges, and suddenly has an "epiphany" as she first sees the world through "male" eyes. And that means realizing that the male sexual role is indeed dominant, and the female role is indeed submissive. (How astonishing!!!)

She finds this new perspective so persuasive that it makes her rethink her previous feminist assumptions of absolute gender equality in bed and all like that.

(It's about time, I'd say. Now I can only hope that the rest of the world's women who have been brainwashed by feminist egalitarian ideology can come to their senses without having

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to strap on goofy fake plastic penises, pretending to be men.)

Are the male-dominant and female-submissive overtones of ordinary sexual intercourse all that subtle? No, of course not. The author seems to imply that only men are in the right position and perspective to have this insight, that from a woman's position and point of view, the dominance-submission aspects are invisible.

But she also seems to indicate that her own previous experience of sex had been one of erotic surrender; it sounds like she never before realized that surrender had anything to do with submission, or with being female. That is, perhaps she was experiencing the female surrender/submission aspects of sex, without consciously understanding that that's what she was experiencing, or without labeling it as such.

That seems exceedingly odd to me, because it has always been clear to me that the female role during heterosexual intercourse is one of submission and surrender, and the male who is penetrating and in control has the dominant role. It seems so obvious to me that I find it absurd when it needs to be pointed out. But maybe this author's history is not so unique. Maybe plenty of women have feelings of surrender, without really realizing what they are.

(If so, it suggests there could be many more sexually submissive women out there than most surveys have indicated. For a woman to register as sexually "submissive" on a survey, she has to be (a) aware of it on a conscious level, and (b) willing to honestly admit it, despite the per-

vasive social stigma that would entail these days and (c) willing to use that specific word to describe her enjoyment of being sexually dominated by a man.)

It sounds like the author had previously imagined that the man was feeling something very similar to what she was feeling—some sort of erotic *surrender*—until her dildo-wielding experiment shattered that illusion. I have also read plenty of erotic fiction written by women authors, where BOTH parties are passionately "surrendering" during sex. Most of this fiction is heterosexual, but some of it is by women writers imagining two gay men and what they would be feeling. So perhaps it's quite common for women to project onto their male lovers (and most other men) the typical feminine experience of sex as a form of surrender. But I agree with the Salon author that the male role in sex is innately a more dominant one, and I believe most men experience it that way.

Why would women be so likely to project feminine experiences and attitudes onto men, while men don't typically project masculine sexual experiences and attitudes onto women? (After all, women are supposed to be the ones with greater psychological insight into what makes their partners tick.)

Maybe it's because a man can more easily imagine how it would feel to be pinned down and penetrated, and it is very clear to him that that experience would involve a feeling of vulnerability and being dominated; and that is why so many (mostly straight) men find that idea utterly

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abhorrent. So it may be clear to him that the female experience is a submissive one, even if he would not at all enjoy that role himself. (Again, I'm speaking here of most straight men, probably not all.)

I think it might also explain the old "Madonna vs Whore" mentality that many men have towards women. Because to a man being penetrated and on the bottom during sex could be a humiliating experience, and a loss of manhood to be so vulnerable. And because it would be humiliating to him, he also imagines that it must be humiliating to a woman. And therefore, any woman who actually enjoys that sort of thing?? Well, there must be something wrong with her, she must have no self-respect.

So the women he respects must be thought of as sexless, and the women he fucks are ones he cannot respect. That sort of attitude bodes very ill for any kind of deep and loving romantic relationship.

The cure for that is for the man to realize that women are indeed very different creatures from men, and that a woman can experience the act of being conquered and fucked by her man as not only intensely pleasurable, but also deeply fulfilling, and even ennobling; it can be essential to her feeling that her womanhood is fully expressed and honored.

I recall here some scenes from various novels by Ayn Rand, in which she makes it clear that her heroines are proud of their erotic longings for dominant and heroic men, and proud of being ravished by their heroes. In at least one novel Rand

compares this to the feeling of being a priestess, in that it's a sacred and exalting experience for the woman. (I thoroughly agree with this sentiment, which is one reason why I found Ayn Rand to be such a powerful writer, even though I disagree with her on many things.)

So maybe it's not uncommon for both men and women to have some degree of cluelessness about how the other gender experiences sex.

Still, this author's essay struck me as very odd, because my intuition had always told me that if I'm experiencing the sex act as surrender, then the man is experiencing it as some sort of conquest, an act of domination and control. I find it rather freaky that this author never even guessed that until her little gender-bending adventures with a dildo. Is that really what it takes for women to embrace the submissive aspects of their sexuality? (Again, not talking about all women, but many or most of us.)

I don't think so. I think a little honest self-reflection should go a long way, especially if one does not burden it down with ideological taboos regarding what one is and is not allowed to enjoy.²⁷¹

"HOW MY DRESS HAS CHANGED" (6 SEPTEMBER 2006)

Years ago, long before I ever heard of anything close to Taken In Hand, every now and then I heard stories of a "friend of a friend of a friend, etc." who got up a good bit before her husband to do her hair and make up so as to present a more

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pleasant appearance for him when he woke up.

Another distant story described a wife who made sure she was wearing a dress and heels when her husband arrived home from work. At the time, I was absolutely horrified at the idea. I mean, come on! I personally made sure my husband saw me looking and wearing my worst before we were married, partially because I wanted him to see the real me, preparing him for what he could expect once we were married.

Well, fast forward a decade or so to our new dynamics and I honestly don't cringe as much at those same stories. The getting dolled up at the crack of dawn is a bit of a stretch, but assuming one's self-esteem is intact and healthy, the principle behind it doesn't seem so bad anymore.

I find myself taking much more note of my appearance these days. Rather than changing into my sweats the moment the door swings shut behind me when I come home from work, I find myself considering what my husband would find cute/sexy when he arrives home later. Make-up isn't much of an issue as I don't wear much, but hair is for him. He dislikes ponytails so my hair is usually down for him even though getting it up and out of the way might be a bit more convenient for me.

I take pleasure in presenting a bit more of a feminine look for him, knowing that he really appreciates it, as he's told me on a number of occasions. Oh, and of course it

makes me feel sexier too. Funny how things change.²⁷²

"TAKEN IN HAND - THE VIEW OF A PSYCHIATRIST" (8 SEPTEMBER 2006)

As a psychiatrist I can state that mental health professionals do not share one set of beliefs concerning Taken In Hand Relationships.

To some professionals and many others, Taken In Hand relationships can be thought of as providing a unique method of eroticizing conflict—turning displeasure to pleasure. Frequently couples in conflict physically withdraw from each other, which is often more painful to both than any spanking.

Taken in Hand provides a man with the opportunity to turn towards his wife with honor during conflict, because he has immediate evidence of the respect shown him by his wife's trust in allowing him to spank her. Spanking serves as an immediate outlet for his anger and the subsequent lovemaking is the catalyst that transforms the bad feelings to good.

Relinquishing power frees a woman from her fear that her husband will abandon her or lose interest. Repeated conflict poisons relationships. When anger is not channeled into something more positive, such as passionate love, homeostasis can only be maintained by dissociating from the anger or by ceasing to care. And when positive emotional engagement has gone, the marriage is effectively over, even if not legally over.

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Her relinquishing control invites correction, control, and chivalry from a respectful man. And her respect for him as a man, in her act of submission to him, virtually guarantees his continued erotic interest in her. The termination of conflict in the act of lovemaking is the glue that binds Taken In Hand couples together.

There are many ways of cementing relationships; none necessarily better than others. Mutual love, shown by Taken in Hand couples, is the best proof of the efficacy of this philosophy of intimate relationships, regardless of the arguments of those who do not understand it.²⁷³

"IS TAKEN IN HAND BAD FOR WOMEN WHO WERE ABUSED IN CHILDHOOD?" (12 SEPTEMBER 2006)

One of the great tragedies of physical or sexual abuse or other traumatic events in childhood is that they may cause the person to become permanently more physiologically and psychologically reactive and sensitive. With a bit of bad luck and perhaps unfortunate genes and physiological vulnerability, traumatic events can lead to deleterious changes in the brain and responses to stress. Such individuals' limbic systems (roughly-speaking, think: emotion) seem to be going crazy, shooting "EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY!" "messages" to their frontal cortex (think: human thinking, reason), and reacting wildly when any "messages" from the frontal cortex even hint that there might be a problem. Such individuals

als can sometimes seem really infuriating to others, because in wrestling with their physiological reactivity they tend to be an exhausting cauldron of emotions and often seem over-dramatic, over-sensitive, and too intense.

In severe cases (often diagnosed clinically as "borderline personality disorder") such individuals grow up to have an inability to maintain stable relationships and an extreme fear of abandonment; they sometimes go to shocking lengths to try to prevent someone they love from leaving them (think: *Fatal Attraction*). Individuals diagnosed with borderline personality disorder tend to feel suicidal sometimes, may try to commit suicide, and they tend to engage in self-harm such as burning or cutting themselves in a desperate attempt to distract themselves from the pain and anguish plaguing them.

What has this to do with Taken In Hand? Some psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers fear that women with borderline personality disorder may be drawn to Taken In Hand, and that the last thing they need is a Taken In Hand relationship. Their view is that Taken In Hand is yet more abuse, or that it is the relationship analogue of self-harm, like wrist-slashing. I want to address this directly.

First, I do think that women who have a history of sexual or physical abuse, or who have a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder, have to be extra careful, when choosing a spouse, to avoid ending up with an abuser, and they may well need some outside help as they create their Taken In Hand relation-

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ship. (Perhaps I will write more about that another time.) However, I thoroughly reject the idea that an established Taken In Hand relationship is yet more abuse (if it is, then it is not a Taken In Hand relationship but an abusive one!) or that previously-abused women must avoid relationships having any whiff of power/spanking dynamics.

Most readers of this site, as far as I can tell, have not been abused and are not remotely unstable. One of the things women often say when they email me is that they really like the fact that this site is for “normal”, down-to-earth people. But since mental health professionals seem to be taking an interest in Taken In Hand, in this article (which I have adapted from a comment I originally posted on this thread) I want to make a point not about the general readership of this site but about a small proportion of readers—about women who, perhaps because of physiological vulnerability and exposure to abuse in childhood, are very reactive and may even have a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder.

My view is that for these very unfortunate women, Taken In Hand can be a positively therapeutic thing. Even much of the standard literature on borderline personality disorder (see, for example, Marsha Linehan's work, e.g. *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment of Borderline Personality Disorder*) admits that individuals with borderline personality disorder tend to do well if they are in a stable relationship, and badly if they are not.

It is true that women with borderline personality disorder may in

some cases feel drawn to intensity in relationships, and perhaps also to violence, power and control dynamics, and thus to Taken In Hand relationships. It is also true, as I said above, that the process of finding someone and creating a Taken In Hand relationship is fraught with danger for such women. However, trying to uncross such women's allegedly crossed wires is like trying to turn a gay man straight. So in my view, the question should become: *How can such women get this safely and healthily, in a mutually-satisfying relationship that facilitates the healthy growth and development of both persons?* A Taken In Hand relationship is potentially such a way.

As was explained in one of the early articles on this site,* a Taken In Hand relationship involving spanking provides a way for potential fights to be channelled into connection and emotional engagement through spanking, passionate sex, etc. For the women I am discussing in this post, engagement with their man is a huge need.

Moreover, their emotional and physiological reactivity tends to mean that they often panic, react badly to things, and feel as though the end of the world is nigh on a regular basis. I think that whether because of their childhood abuse or for some other reason, their limbic system is going crazy and communicating to their frontal cortex that a disaster is happening; they then interpret this physiological fight-or-flight hyper-reacting cognitively,

* “Why you should not withhold spanking!” 29 November 2003.

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confabulating reasons for the crisis, perhaps blaming whoever happens to be there, and bad things happen, not least of which is that they inadvertently destroy the relationships they most value.

Damping down the physiological reactivity can often be done pharmacologically, but there are other ways of dealing with this limbic system panic. Instead of—or in addition to—taking the pharmacological route (and I am referring to sensible use of drugs prescribed by a competent psychiatrist, not any other pharmacological “help”), it is worth considering how such a person might deal with what is now quite challenging physiological and emotional reactivity, and a legacy of childhood abuse, quite possibly self-hate, an unstable self-image, an inability to address issues with others moderately, fear of abandonment, excessive jealousy, emotional lability (mood swings), and many other problems.

One thing I like to recommend to such women is that they take up jujitsu. This has the intensity and perhaps the violence that such women are often drawn to, and it is in the context of a highly disciplined art. It is empowering, liberating, and can get to the heart of the problem, actually helping to change the way the brain reacts, utilising limbic reactivity when appropriate during physical combat and soothing and damping down limbic system hyperactivity otherwise, and thus bringing a general sense of calm and peace and personal power to the woman.

In a relationship, some such women find that Taken In Hand dynamics—and in particular a Taken In Hand relationship with discipline/punishment or some kind of physical conquest—serve a similarly soothing and paradoxically empowering function. Many such women need intensity, and find their husband's control and discipline or other physical engagement very soothing. The discipline and control are forms of *engagement*. A Taken In Hand relationship can be a way to remain connected, or reconnect, when the woman's physiological and emotional reactivity might otherwise make that very difficult or impossible. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence that being taken in hand soothes many women, whether they could be diagnosed as suffering from borderline personality disorder or not.

The state of peace and calm that a person skilled in the art of jujitsu feels is in many respects the same state as the state of subspace that many Taken In Hand women experience. Taken In Hand discipline/punishment/control/physical conquest can channel limbic hyperactivity into sexual excitement, energy and control, just like jujitsu can channel it into disciplined, precise combat. Both promote self-confidence and better relationships with others. Compare this behaviour with what many people afflicted with borderline personality disorder often do. They distract themselves from the emotional pain they are experiencing by engaging in self-destructive acts such as cutting themselves (slashing their wrists, for

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example) and other forms of self-harm.

Some argue that engaging in a Taken In Hand relationship is like engaging in cutting, but that is not true. A Taken In Hand relationship is loving, caring, creative, deeply intimate and harmonious, evolving, promotes the individual growth of both individuals and empowers both individuals, as well as being sexually exciting in the long term in a way that an equal relationship would not be for those drawn to Taken In Hand relationships. A Taken In Hand relationship is fundamentally constructive, not destructive. Cutting distracts in the short term but leads to more self-hate and misery (if not death) in the long term. There is nothing constructive about it. A Taken In Hand relationship is more like jujitsu than cutting, as my guess is that controlled firing of limbic system emotional centres occurs in both cases. Moreover, it seems to me that Taken In Hand, being a deep, abiding relationship, has the potential to be even more therapeutic than jujitsu.

Taken In Hand uses the power of a stable loving relationship and positive emotions like love and feelings of warmth, closeness and security to soothe the person and bring her peace. More specifically, Taken In Hand also uses the power of passionate sex in the context of the deep sexual and emotional connection between the two individuals, to overcome horrible limbic system hyperactivity. (And for those drawn to intense physical interactions, being physically taken in hand can produce the same endorphin rush

and feeling of peacefulness as passionate sex can.)

In summary, even in cases where there are in fact serious problems of childhood abuse and crossed wires and even psychiatric diagnoses such as borderline personality disorder, it does not follow that a Taken In Hand relationship is a bad idea. It might actually be positively helpful, assuming that the woman takes great care to ensure that she is with the right man, not just another abuser, and so on.²⁷⁴

"THE MAN WHO DOESN'T GIVE A STUFF ABOUT LABELS" (12 SEPTEMBER 2006)

I have been with my partner for just under a year. We met about six months before that. From the outset, our relationship has echoed the philosophies of this site. I'm not so sure that my partner is at all the type of guy I would have expected to have such a dominant streak!

I have known that this is the type of relationship I want for many years and have actively looked for an alpha male to dominate me. Like so many who post here, I'm generally an independent, strong-willed and strong woman. In my personal life however, I'm so bored with that and I want to be his® in the traditional sense. I don't really have any fight left and I don't see fighting as a good thing in my personal life; obeying feels so much more comforting, safe and calming and as such I now have an overwhelming sense of my own wellbeing.

In the past, I have found myself going out with a never ending line

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of men who would consider themselves alpha®. Invariably tall, testosterone-filled, somewhat aggressive types... yes, over and over, I made the same mistake, taking physical strength for emotional strength. And do you know what? I think that those big tough guys were quite emotionally weak, they had never had to use their emotional intelligence to win through, everyone had always given them their way in response to what can only truly be described as bullying.

So, imagine my surprise when I met and fell for my current partner, Lewis. He's the same height as I, and very quiet and gentle. Not a hint of testosterone madness about him!

We met through an internet dating site. He lived quite close by and we met up a few times for drinks and meals. I then met another alpha® guy, all 6'6" of him! I had a rather horrid time with that one for about three months, eventually realizing that I had hooked up with yet another emotional bully—actually “emotional sadist” might be a more accurate term for him. Fortunately, a few days after I finally saw the light, Lewis just happened to be on line showing up in my Messenger box. We got chatting again, met up a few times and then after a particularly horrid day for me, he dropped this into our chat (yes, I saved the conversation!) “I've been thinking a lot about you recently and I've come to the conclusion that I want to make you happy. I think you need to be protected and I'd very much like to do that if you'll accept that is what you need from me.”

It stopped me in my tracks. I'd never really allowed myself to need® somebody before or to truly lean on someone and be dependant and yet a voice in my head was screaming for me to let him know that was what I really truly wanted. I didn't manage it very well though, I replied that I'm not sure that I have very much to give right now®. Fortunately, he responded that he wasn't after me giving anything! I needed to learn to accept first! And so our relationship began to blossom.

Lewis is not at all dominating and yet I find myself deferring to him, seeking his advice and taking it pretty much without question. I defer to him because he earns it rather than because he demands it. From the outset, I have found that he simply takes control. We have never agreed to this as such, it just happened for us and I have to say it is absolutely lovely and I feel so very safe and secure under his control and protection. I think I am probably one of a very large community when I say that what I need protecting from most of all in my life is ME—my own self-destruct buttons. Lewis does that for me in a firm and loving way. There is no micromanagement in our relationship, just a leader and his second in command, who loves him and respects him and most of all trusts him to do what is best for us.

We have had our arguments, but he doesn't shout and rant, nor does he do anything at all bullying, he just sits me down and makes me listen to him and then makes me think out whatever it is I am feeling about the subject. He doesn't expect

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me not to have an opinion and indeed doesn't expect me to agree with his. All he expects is that I respect his position, and in turn he respects mine, and that having recognized a problem, I will work with him on the solution we agree together, always so far a solution he comes up with (he's a good problem solver too!). We both know that when it comes down to it the ultimate decision making powers are his and that I will follow his lead, having voiced any concerns I might have and knowing that he will have listened.²⁷⁵

"HOW MY HUSBAND SET ME FREE" (13 SEPTEMBER 2006)

It was my wonderful husband who made me to open my eyes and see how a Taken In Hand relationship would be everything I ever wanted, but at the time didn't realize it and would have fought to the death before it would happen. He changed me from being ardent feminist extremist in almost every sense of the word to a much more submissive woman in just one evening. Although, I am an agnostic, to me, it was a born-again experience. Nothing like this has ever changed me to such an extent as far as I can remember, nor has anything been as liberating. He showed me how such a relationship could work, although at the time we didn't have words for it other than him being the head of the household. He was the one who convinced me, after about 3 years into our relationship, that that was what he needed and that that was

what I wanted. At the time, I was extremely anti-male-head of the household in any relationship and always adamantly resisted any attempt on his part (or for that matter any man or woman) to "infringe on my rights" or so I felt at the time. For all I was concerned at the time, I would first die single and alone before any of THAT would ever happen.

It turns out that his favorite cousin came to visit one night with his wife and teenage daughter, and my hubby and his cousin talked religion all night. As an agnostic, I tried to keep my mouth shut and was successful for many hours; however, at one point, I just couldn't take it any longer. His cousin said he was "sexist" and that he thought a man should be the head of the household in a marriage. I tried to get the opinion of my hubby, whom I felt should be on my side, and he made it be known that he agreed with his cousin. At the time I didn't realize it, but his cousin just believed that most people would consider him sexist with his opinions the way they are. I felt angry and betrayed, so hubby and I got into a huge fight, and I told him that I wanted a divorce as I couldn't live with such a chauvenistic, sexist man who thought so little of me and of women in general. Well, needless to say, I made an arse out of myself because I misunderstood the meaning behind what they were saying. I thought it was only a one-way street with the man getting all the glory and the woman putting up with all the crap for the good of the man and that the woman didn't get anything out of it.

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I "thought" my hubby had turned into a total a--hole.

Well, after I cooled off somewhat and his cousin left, I felt terrible, betrayed, wronged, etc. I thought that he should have taken up for me and not let someone sit on my deck and exclaim that they were sexist. At the time, it felt comparable to the scene of a mixed-race (1 black and 1 white) couple with the white person's white cousin over and him saying he himself was racist with the white husband not only NOT taking up for his black wife, but agreeing with the cousin!. That was how it felt. It was terrible, absolutely terrible. I loved this man so much, and yet, here it was; we were going to split. I was heartbroken.

Later in the evening, he came to me and said he wanted someone who would recognise him as the head of the household and who is also a Christian. Being too tore up to do anything else, I agreed to let him be the head of the household and that I would try to be a Christian, even though I didn't believe. I felt like crap and that I would have to contemplate how I would end up leaving this jerk later when I could handle everything emotionally no matter how much I loved him. I went upstairs to sit alone and read a book we had about divorce when he came to me and told me to come to bed with him. Something told me to go while I was sitting there trying to read through all the stress and tears. That was when the life-changing moment happened. As we lay in our bed, he held me in his arms and enabled me to really feel how much he loved me and explained to me how

he could give me the comforts and love that I always needed as a woman by allowing him to be the head of the household as a man, and what his responsibilities would be. He melted my heart and got to the core of my broken self allowing me to realize that that was the key to love, real love. He showed me how I have been unhappy and fighting myself and my very desires based on what I have learned from society as a whole, which had been leading me to being agitated and angry with men, and also in turn made me start many arguments with him. He showed me what real love is. I have never been the same since. He is truly a wonderful man, and he has set me free.²⁷⁶

"EGALITARIAN DATING VS ACCEPTING GIFTS GRACIOUSLY" (25 SEPTEMBER 2006)

The concept of an "egalitarian" relationship according to feminist thought is down right bizarre in my opinion. I am a crude woman and I just can't get my mind around it.

I try very hard to avoid nickel and dime people. The price of dinner is always nickels and dimes, I don't care where it is. If he decided on a place that he cannot afford and he wants you to pay the tab, he is a cad and a very bad negotiator. It also means he will only find success by nickel and dimming everyone. If you like that type, then pay your share!

I don't know who thought of this egalitarian thing. Who could possibly be convinced that they were

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abridging their rights and undermining themselves by allowing the date to pay for dinners? I say if they want to pay, let them pay. They have free will and are not cataton-ic—there must be an awareness of expenses.

The guy who says “I’ll pay so I can play” has told you everything about himself and it is best to stick him with the bill and teach him a lesson so he will not run a cheap charade again.

What good does it do to pay for half the bill? This means you had half a con run on you and as a feminist you should feel better? It is like saying, “well he insulted me and I paid for 50% so now I feel much better. My nickels have protected me!” Or saying, “I bought my equality.”

Equality is not a commodity and I never saw it on the stock exchange. People are not for sale at any price, ever, not even prostitutes. If the feminist thought is so rudimentary and primitive that women feel that if they allow someone to pay for their dinner they are perceived as a whore, paying 50% is encouraging this barbaric ideology. It is supremely offensive for any women to believe that money spent on dates constitutes a lien on her soul or person and it is as ugly as accusing a rape victim of seducing her rapist. No wonder women are still not equal to men financially!

In business, I regularly lavish probable patrons with dinner and treat them like royalty. This formality is expected and it would be an embarrassment to me if I did otherwise. It would reflect poorly on my

business. I often spend a lot of money and don’t get a deal, that is all part of the process. It proves that I am capable of handling patrons elegantly and that I am not so desperate that I begrudge them a coke. Do I call my clients and bitterly say “I bought you dinner, now you buy from me!” They would say. “Yeah, where is the contract?” Bad manners kill big deals.

The person who believes that flesh can be exchanged over dinner dates is very confused and unable to think rationally. This is an intangible that is implicitly unenforceable. Sadly you will be sold fool’s gold many times and in many ways, by many opportunistic people if you buy into the “egalitarian” gig.

A man that will come lugubriously knocking on your door wanting some kind of reparation for his nickels is disturbed and should be placed immediately in the stalker category. Rest assured this type of man will hold you under duress for that extra celery stick that you ate even if you paid the whole bill. Why pay and lose cash to boot? Are “egalitarian” women afraid to respond to the comical accusations and demands of a forlorn date? Do they imagine that the law will come get them and put them in hand cuffs for that extra capriccio they ate? All this is a boggy. Do “egalitarian” women really want to be in bed with a man who is thinking that she is a gold digging floozie because she ate the extra clams?

It is easy to see if a bohemian man has no cash. If the woman is flush and the guy has no cash and she is turned on and the cash buys a great

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night for the two of them, then that is great too. Who really cares? And if a man has limited finances, then it is rude to be unaware of that and to yoke him with all the bills. Doing a spreadsheet over a dinner date is tacky and crass!

It is false pride to worry about paying when there is a large financial gap between the individuals. It is important to accept gifts graciously and to focus on who the individual is and not what dollars they bring to the table. Humans have many things to offer each other beside money and to focus on money is to denigrate the far more important things. Some gifts can be much sweeter and much more rare than money. We all desperately need to be seen for who we are and not how much money we have.

A woman with real self esteem does not shame herself with "egalitarian" calculations.²⁷⁷

"BEING YOURSELF" (27 SEPTEMBER 2006)

The dance of being yourself and sharing is a tricky business. For years I searched for something. For what I wasn't exactly clear. What I wanted was someone who loved me. My fantasy, someone who loved me enough to set limits, spank me if necessary, take me in hand.

I used to listen to this dating phone service in my city. I listened to the Domination/Submission category. Yikes! No one seemed to talk about love there. When I happened to bump into Gary, I had nothing to lose. I just decided to be myself. No

fibs, no 'prove my worth'. My personality is highly intelligent, a force to be reckoned with, softened with a soft voice and easy laugh. I seemingly tricked men most of my life because of it. Boy did they resent the hell out of me when they found out that a soft voice doesn't mean a soft character.

Gary took the time to find out went when on behind the voice. He asked questions, challenged answers and tripped me up. It wasn't long before he found out I had a private submissive streak I barely knew I had myself. It was a matter of him wanting to know me better. What (designed) luck that he could easily coax me to defer to him. All with attention and soft suggestions. His only request is that I be myself. From there he went to great lengths to have me trust him.

In a possible relationship, you need to build a foundation of caring and love. Your man's personality will come out. You can drop hints, he can ask questions. But if it's not love, why would you allow any man to dominate you or take you in hand? To overlook the initial attraction and go right for the dominance, as some do, would be to miss a very big and important first step. Don't look for that above all else. Look for trust and love. No matter how society creates men today, I believe that once they reach a certain age, their own confidence takes over and the importance of one on one is primary. Meaning he's willing to take a chance. I know it's hard. Don't ever give up on the dream.²⁷⁸

**"WHAT CONTROL MEANS TO ME" (28
OCTOBER 2006)**

My dearest and I were lying in bed last night talking about our relationship and our dynamics. In the conversation, what we really were trying to solve, or at least work on, is my hunger and my need to feel more control from him and how we could go about that. He mentioned that he felt like he took *much* control sometimes (not that it bothers him, but he knows he can be overbearing sometimes if he doesn't curb his... um... leadership skills). I explained to him that I personally thought he took very little control.

This was a pretty significant difference of opinion and we were a bit baffled at first. After about three years of talking about control, we finally were able to simply put a finger on why we felt so differently about the exact same situation.

Our definition of control was completely different. He makes many/most major decisions, and has the final say. This generally doesn't present much of a problem, and mostly, is quite satisfying for us both.

He handles the money (thank goodness: I love love love this). He keeps us organized and on track, and is always managing the bigger plan, be it finances, scheduling, work (we work together), family events and commitments, etc. I float from crisis to crisis, chore to chore, and am pretty darn happy that he has the skill and the knack and is willing to do the big-picture thing, so I gladly and willingly go along. I

like his "management", if you will, of our family, and it works well for all of us.

What I was missing and what he did not understand, and what I could not put into words before last night, was that I hungered for more control, but control specifically of ME. I guess you could refer to it as a sexual or erotic kind of control though that's not exactly what I mean, and that does not either ring true or false. I don't mean him demanding things in bed, or being forceful in that way, though I enjoy that too. It is something much deeper. I still have not quite put my finger on it, but it certainly is more than him making sure we get gas on the days that the local gas stations have their sales, or making sure if I receive a bill, to get it to him so it can be taken care of. It certainly does have something to do with him physically taking control, but it's emotional too.

I like to feel like I have no choice but to do as he requests. I like to feel vulnerable and a little afraid (of consequences) if I don't do what he expects. I like the intensity and thrive on the "being fearful of the consequences" part of it—and in turn—this really fosters the submissive feelings in me. One might think that because of this, I feed off the conflict and might be inclined to push to feel him push back—but I think that's why I am desiring of more—simply because I do NOT push to get the response.

When I get to that "fearful" point, this is when I can just naturally *respond* to him—and those submissive feelings just flow—and he

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explained that in those situations his dominance does much the same. If that fear, trepidation, dread, nervousness—if those feelings were absent—I wouldn't be able to get to that open, loving, vulnerable place that I have waiting for him, and for us. If that fear wasn't there, that absolute knowledge that I *must* do what he asks—and that ultimately, there is no other option—it would lose much—if not most—of what it does for me, and he would not get the raw, naked, soul-bared, completely engaged and into him ME that I can be.

He, even as open as we are, had no idea that I was looking for or needed more control in that sense. I want to stress that it need not necessarily be a knock-down drag-out, but the underlying threat that it WILL be if I don't obey—THAT is what does it. It is not fear that I will be permanently hurt or maimed, and not fear in any way for my safety, but fear that I will be in a long and uncomfortable situation as long as I am not obeying him.

He is absolutely positively without a doubt consistent with his expectations of me, when he has them, but it has been fleeting instances thus far...so we will see how the next level goes. We're quite intrigued about what this will mean for us, and it is really comforting that he sees this as good for us, a positive thing, and having the possibility to bring us closer together than anything prior. The times he truly has been in control of me—and I don't just mean when I was over his knee—are the times that I feel the most passionate towards him and open and receptive

to him, and he responds much the same.²⁷⁹

"IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO" (2 NOVEMBER 2006)

Ah, the Tango...a spicy, sultry, seductive, sensual dance... wherein the man takes in hand his woman and ultimately leads her into submitting to his will as she yields and follows; however, she is not without challenge or resistance to his leading. Is he a man strong enough to soften and conquer her? Is he worthy of her submission?

One can see the steam rising off the two as they generate heat and sparks across the floor. It is vertical lovemaking in motion and even though there are certain steps involved, it visually captures the essence of the sexual dynamic of a Taken In Hand relationship between a man and a woman...from first look to surrender.

The man—I am strong, macho, virile, skilled, self-assured, confident, and taking.

The woman—I am strong, feminine, seductive, arousing, teasing, withholding, and yielding.

The man—You are mine! I will have you!

The woman—Oh? with a feigned lack of interest.

The man—Yes! I will conquer you.

The woman—I don't think so.

The man—Yes! I will take you.

The woman—No, you wouldn't dare.

The man—Yes! I will.

The woman—You brute!

The man—I will.

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The woman—Oh!

The woman—Take me, I'm yours!

The man—I have.

Prior to and during part of the 50's most of the dances, including the tango, involved direct male/female physical contact. Dancing was popular and almost everyone knew the steps. Both partners also knew that there was only one who led, the man—and there was only one who followed, the woman (even though she was dancing backwards and in high heels). Both cannot lead. If the man didn't know the steps and didn't know how to lead and the woman didn't know the steps and didn't know how to follow, it would get pretty ugly and awkward out there with toes being stepped on and people getting bumped into...confusion ensued...very frustrating and no fun.

My parents met at a dance 54 years ago and they are still dancing as well as many of their friends. It's a real delight to watch them as they glide so effortlessly across the floor like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. Other women like to dance with my dad because he's an excellent dancer. He knows all the steps and he knows how to lead and my mom knows all the steps and she knows how to follow. Dancing has always been a vital part of their lives.

During the last 50 or so years, many types of music have been created--Rock & Roll, Acid Rock, Disco, Pop, Hip Hop, Gangster Rap, Heavy Metal--as well as many social events--the birth control pill, the Hippie Generation, the moon landing, The Vietnam War, demonstrations, assassinations, and Women's

Lib, just to name a few. While I like some of the music from these eras, most contact dancing for this generation became almost non-existent because the type of music that was prevalent was hard to dance to. I believe the male-led aspect was somehow lost during this time. Long-live slow dancing, but most dances during the 60's and 70's started to become individual, without contact, and was often in a drug-induced state. It kind of went downhill from there. With the advent of Women's Lib, where most women did not want to follow men, I believe another blow was delivered to male-led relationships. Somehow we forgot all the steps.

Today, there seems to be a resurgence of interest in ballroom/contact dancing, especially the tango, and it will be interesting to see if and how that dynamic will affect the next generation. My youngest son has taken swing and tango lessons and he said that they have helped him become more assured and confident as a man because he has learned how to take the lead. Apparently so, because women enjoy dancing with him, too. I believe he has followed in his grandfather's footsteps.

I've always felt dancing was a great way to know how a man was and as a woman found it very exciting to be in the hands of a man who was skilled in taking control of me without words and in slowly mesmerizing me into submitting to his will...very hot and dreamy.

As on the dance floor, finding a good partner can be a rather difficult process...some men can be too overbearing, can jerk you around and

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hurt you or are too timid, have two left feet and haven't a clue as to what they are doing. I guess it all depends on what moves you.

Would learning how to dance help both sexes navigate through a Taken In Hand relationship? I don't think it would hurt because...it takes two to tango.²⁸⁰

"TAKEN IN HAND - THE BARE ESSENCE" (5 NOVEMBER 2006)

My name is Charlene, and I'd like to introduce myself. My husband and I discussed how we wanted our marriage to be before we got married. We both agreed we wanted a "1950's traditional relationship", where the man was in charge and the woman followed. We argued with our progressive pastor for 4 months to get him to put the word "obey" back into our marriage vows. To us, it is the man's job to protect his family and to be the pillar of the household. It's the woman's job to nurture and support, and of course, obey.

We've been active in the BDSM community because it was the closest thing we found to what we knew we wanted: a dominant/submissive relationship. However, the BDSM community ties their brand of kink into the power exchange, and also uses words like slave and master that we haven't been comfortable with. But we still used information from that community, distilled it down to the bare essence, and have built our marriage. We even came to enjoy certain aspects of the BDSM community, even though it really

doesn't represent our relationship well.

We were both thrilled to find the Taken In Hand website. It was exactly what we've been doing. To us, it took the essentials of a male dominant power exchange and stripped away all the other layers that the BDSM community puts on it. It also fits the model of the Christian marriage, but pulled all the biblical references out. We've been thrilled to have articles to read that aren't flavored by the community they are representing.

So anyway, thanks for having this site where we can continue to exchange ideas as we learn more about what Taken In Hand means to all of you, and continue to grow our relationship!²⁸¹

"TRUTH AND LIFE" (10 NOVEMBER 2006)

In her post, "Do you tell him that you've disobeyed him?," Dazy asked whether she should tell her husband if she has not managed to obey him completely in every detail, due to her enormous workload.

This is very near and dear to my heart. I live in a very busy life and lifestyle. My husband also lives in an equally busy life. We both have commitments and interests that we have to schedule into our day-to-day lives. Mine are both business and personally/family invested, his more business and family. The only problem is that I don't fare all that well with health. I have some bigger issues that require vigilant attention or becomes unmanageable for me. My husband insists I rest every day

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for as long as I can, an hour minimum.

Can you imagine? An hour just not doing anything? Which he counters with "since when is taking care of yourself nothing".

Damn the logic! I feel guilty because I really like to listen to him. And I really do want to take care of myself. From time to time he becomes very strict and wants to know where in my daily calendar have I scheduled this down time.

I don't lie. I hate it, have never lived my life that way and find it easier to speak the truth, no matter what.

It shocked me when he actually understood my position. He told me that it's not his intention to make my life harder. It's his intention to take care of me.

But there are times when work/life/family just takes all the hours of any day. I wouldn't lie about his request/demand. On the other hand, he doesn't expect me to pull time out of the air. I am highly efficient at managing time as it is. So is he. In turn, he will take as many burdens off me to free some of that time so I can rest my problems and enjoy an evening of less pain or problems.

If you are a woman asking yourself if you should tell your husband the truth that you have not managed to obey one of his commands to the letter, tell your husband what the problems are. In a situation like mine, where there is sometimes a problem finding the time, ask your husband to offer suggestions or help you somehow to create that time he'd like you to have. He's not look-

ing to make your life harder. Remember the love he feels for you and see what he comes up with.

My husband is the first to see when I try my best, no matter what he's told me to do. With everything working with a positive nature, the results can be really wonderful and connecting.²⁸²

"CHANGING FOR HIM - PLEASING FOR ME" (28 NOVEMBER 2006)

I remember the early days of my relationship with Gary. He was so supportive. He loved everything about me, so he said. Yet on occasion he made simple suggestions about changes. On my clothes, my hair, makeup and other small but personal matters.

A part of me leaped at the chance to please. A little personality trait that comes out for certain people. Another part of me cringed. What if I didn't like that change? Who am I changing for? Is it a change or is it an improvement?

Yet, as I checked out his preferences, the feedback was always worth it. He adored it. He not so secretly told me how thrilled he was that I was doing it all for him. No woman had ever gone this far to please just him. Now didn't that warm my heart even more! Some of the changes I loved. Others were a nuisance. As I discovered the joy of changes, I also found out some were more trouble than they were worth. It took a bit of courage, add a little 'speak before you think' and I was telling Gary when I didn't like certain things. He surprised me time

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and again by reassuring me that he didn't intend me to be uncomfortable. Nor should I resent something or hate what I ended up with. He always relented with doing what pleased me the most.

Submission has ebbs and flows like most everything else we do. What surprises me with a regular pace is while I may submit, mask it with pleasing either him or even myself. The fact that he wants the act to make me happy first. He wants me comfortable with the look. Proud to be with him.

Our funny story with the "it comes back to bite you" ending: Gary suggested he would like to see me with longer hair. I wore it very short, cropped and gelled into little spikes. It suited me. I have thick heavy curly fuzzy hair. As it grew out, it was an unmanageable mess. The curls weren't those nice spiral ones, they were huge, fuzzy and didn't do me any kind of justice. I ended up slicking back as much as I could around my face and just letting the rest go wild. It hardly grew down, mostly just out. In my never ending whining to my stylist, he finally suggested to put a relaxer through. With permission I did. Then one of the other stylist blow dried me straight. Straight! I was hooked. So this is what hair looks like! Impossible to maintain on my own however. So I asked Gary if I could go back from time to time to have them blow dry. He agreed. Somehow that just gravitated to weekly. Now I don't even wash my own hair. I make a weekly appointment. Gary set up an account for me. I show up and do what I want. He goes in from time to

time and clears the account. My hair no longer belongs to him. It's all mine! I love it. Thanks Gary. A case of submission gone good.²⁸³

"HOW CAN I PERSUADE HIM TO TAKE CHARGE IN OUR RELATIONSHIP?" (1 DECEMBER 2006)

How can I persuade him to take control in our relationship?

One way to persuade him might be to show him articles from this site, especially ones by men, and articles that talk about what's in it for the man.

Don't push him. Don't keep going on and on about Taken In Hand. Don't force him to talk about it endlessly. Give him the information, and then wait for him to think about it and initiate any changes. Avoid haranguing him! Give it time! If he likes reading things, give him a list of the articles you most like on the site, and something you yourself have written that paints a word picture of what life would be like between you in a Taken In Hand relationship. If he does not like reading things, do not bombard him with articles to read.

Convey the information in a way that will suit *him*. Be *concise*, and also be *clear, logical, precise, concrete* and *specific*. If you say too much, he will tune you out or feel too overwhelmed to read everything. If you are vague, he will misunderstand what you are asking for.

If you are having trouble putting into words what you want, try writing it down. If you end up writing a lot, and it is not *concise, clear, logi-*

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cal, precise, concrete and specific, re-write it until it is. Write a single paragraph, or a very short list.

Show him what is in it for him, but whatever you do, don't attempt to blackmail him into taking you in hand by implicitly threatening to behave badly or be upset if he does not hop to it and meet your demands. Does that sound like something that would appeal to a man who might want to be in control?

Don't behave badly to try to provoke him. Apart from being morally objectionable, that is likely to put him off the idea completely, and might even cause him to leave you. Why should he want to be with someone who treats him so badly? Think about what a bad taste that is likely to leave in his mouth.

Instead of focusing on yourself and your own needs, and becoming more demanding, try thinking more about your husband and his wishes, and do whatever you can to please him. He is much more likely then to want to please you in turn.

Don't be demanding and self-centred. This is not something to which you are *entitled*, and nor are you offering him a gift: recognise that actually you are asking him to give *you* a gift, and approach him accordingly. And be sure to express your appreciation if he shows the slightest sign of moving in the direction you are asking him to move. If you complain that it is not enough, or criticise his efforts to take you in hand, that will just cause him to forget the idea and go back to how things were.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that if you start trying to make a

really huge effort to honour his wishes and requests, he will never firmly take charge. On the contrary, he is much more likely to step up to the plate if you show good will and don't try to provoke him into taking you in hand. Once he feels confident that it is not going to be an endless and exhausting battle for control, he is much more likely to forcefully take charge and take you in hand if needed. Try taking a step towards him instead of making his life more difficult, and see what happens.

If he does not seem to have grasped what you are asking for, you may not have been clear, concrete and specific enough when introducing the idea. Try to convey the missing information again, but be very careful not to harangue him.

Expect your wishes and preferences and your idea of Taken In Hand to change over time. What you think you want now may not be quite what you will want a year from now. The details will change. Your Taken In Hand relationship will evolve.

For example, those new to Taken In Hand sometimes make the mistake of focusing on discipline and punishment as opposed to the idea of a Taken In Hand relationship. In other words, what they have is a DD (domestic discipline) relationship, not a Taken In Hand one. Then, when the husband is posted overseas on active military duty, or husband or wife is incapacitated or ill in such a way that physical discipline and punishment is impossible, that is a problem. Whereas those who focus on the idea of the Taken In Hand relationship and are thus fo-

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cusing on the husband wearing the trousers in the relationship don't have that problem (of feeling that the DD relationship has been lost) because the husband's control can be expressed in many different ways. Whilst you yourself may not have to deal with a long-distance situation, paralysis or other very serious illness, there will be other issues. So if you are a person who is currently focusing on discipline and punishment rather than a Taken In Hand relationship, you may well, over time, move away from your DD focus.

The man wearing the trousers is a deeper psychological reality that does not require you both to be present, fit, healthy and physically up to discipline, but that psychological reality often takes time to develop. It evolves along the way. Your understanding of Taken In Hand will change as you go along. So will his. You should both be aware of this. Have fun experimenting. Be willing to backtrack and make changes.

Don't expect more than a human being can deliver. Never ever compare your husband to other men, even in your own mind. Start focusing on the things you love about him, rather than focusing on what you think is lacking. Be happy and appreciative of any progress there is, even the smallest thing. Think like a glass half full person rather than a glass half empty person, and instead of complaining that there is only a mouthful of water in the glass, be delighted in that mouthful and let him know how much you enjoyed it!

Don't expect miracles, and don't expect anything to happen over-

night. Think in terms of years rather than days.* Think in terms of trial and error, experiments, exploring possibilities, and taking several steps backward on a regular basis on your journey.²⁸⁴

"A HAPPY END TO MARITAL DEADLOCK" (1 DECEMBER 2006)

Men who love women who want to be taken in hand, may nonetheless fear committing to the way of relating that their women want. They may think it is not normal for a man in the modern age to control his wife, at least not normal in the statistical sense. Most couples don't live in a Taken in Hand relationship. And what would friends and relatives say if they knew? And how does Taken In Hand help the man to feel positive about his relationship? If he likes the idea, he may well feel guilty about it.

What does the woman say, to coax her man into giving it a try? Should she tell him that it is good for him because he gets to be in charge of most things, which really means that his job is to *do* most things, or at least organize most activities that support the household? Does she tell him his feelings will no longer be particularly relevant, because his job

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **How can I persuade him to take charge in our relationship?**]

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will be to nurture *hers*? Why would most men want that?

The answer is that they wouldn't. Most men should not be in a Taken in Hand relationship, and therefore most women should not offer it to them. Indeed, I would caution women to not seek a Taken in Hand relationship with a man, unless she knows that he enjoys control and he also already believes, on some level, that he should be willing to profoundly sacrifice for his family and has demonstrated his sincere desire to do so. And a man is not an appropriate taken-in-hand kind of guy unless altruism and thoughtful concern for his wife's feelings are already a part of his character.

Now perhaps these traits of his have been thwarted at home. Perhaps because their marriage has been "equal" and his taken-in-hand-inclined wife has thus felt endlessly frustrated and unsatisfied, the marriage has not been as happy as it might have been. Perhaps his wife has, in attempts to communicate with him, soured their relationship by criticizing and arguing. When the irrelevant but necessary mundane details of life have sapped the energy and time the two individuals used to have for each other, it is easy for both to lose the empathy and passion that started it all. It is the vague doubt, the unfulfilled need for love, the insecurity about a lifetime with someone who now seems strange, that drives the (often unconscious) search for reconnection. At least argument requires the presence of another human being, temporarily, so perhaps this is why it occurs so frequently.

But argument is a temporary salve. And it is sheer torture for a man to live with a critical, argumentative, unhappy wife. To a man, unhappiness on the part of his wife can seem like criticism of him and his ability to make his wife happy. He needs her to be happy. An unhappy, angry, critical wife may be arguing to try to deal with feelings of frustration, disappointment, loneliness, and even feelings of rejection and abandonment and the terror of being alone in the world. She may feel desperate for connection and find her husband distant and unconnected. She may have put too much of herself into the relationship and be expecting more or different than her husband is able to give.

"Where is he, emotionally? And if I define myself through him yet I cannot feel him, then where am I?"

To the husband on the receiving end of all this, it can seem as though his wife is trying to destroy him. He may wonder if his wife thinks that perhaps if he bleeds too, they will at least share their suffering together. At a loss to know how to deal with this, the husband either jumps into the maelstrom and is sucked inside, or distances himself even more. Round 2.

The wife doesn't understand why her efforts to connect with her husband fail so dismally, and the husband doesn't understand why the wife seems so upset and angry with him.

And then the wife finds Taken in Hand. It is such a relief. And indeed it can in many cases solve this kind of problem. Connection at last! A man who helps her feel secure and

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always loved. A man who is present for her, virtually always, seems ideal.

But why would her man want to try this new relationship style? Why should he be willing to devote his career, all of his organizational talents, his intelligence and care, and sometimes even his very life to protect his family? Why should he be willing to sacrifice his own feelings and wellbeing to protect and cherish the feelings of his wife?

Why? Because she is finally offering to him something that she has withheld for years that he wants. The ability to be himself. Sounds like a cliché, but it is exactly the right formulation. Let me explain. Regardless of who is ultimately at fault for the emotional distance that has been created between them—and blaming and faultfinding is rarely constructive—her haranguing and his emotional distancing in response cause great pain and suffering. And Taken In Hand offers a direct, immediate, and forceful solution. It requires of the man an understanding of a complex problem, but it is one that *he can solve*.

A take-charge man loves to solve problems. But if his wife doesn't let him do so, he will leave the marriage, whether he physically walks out or not. In particular, if a modern relationship does not value his take-charge propensities, then he will take charge elsewhere, for example at work, and psychologically check out of the relationship at home. His ignoring of his wife, and her arguing with him, are two complementary dysfunctions paralyzing many a modern relationship. Many alpha

males have (emotionally) left their modern marriages.

But when a woman says to her man that even if she fights, he has the right (indeed obligation) to stop the fight, right then, the invitation encourages his innate engagement. She appeals to his problem-solving alpha nature. In giving him control, she is giving him the power to stop her haranguing, and she is giving him a way to make both of them happy. In giving him the right to take her in hand, she is permitting him to be himself at home as well as work, and he revels in the power, even if it entails self-sacrifice.

What type of engagement can she expect? This obviously varies from couple to couple. But a woman offering to a man a Taken in Hand relationship is offering to trust that his decision is the correct one (even when it isn't) even if just for the purposes of ending a corrosive argument. And she is saying to him,

"Even if I fight you, you have permission to do what is safe and necessary to control me to make things right. More important than the content of our argument is the engagement you have with me. Exercise your rights to spank me, discipline me, caress me, or rape me. But whatever you do, *be with me*."

A woman asking a man to take her in hand is offering much, for she is bravely baring the actual content of her feelings—her need to be loved and cared for by a force greater than herself. She is putting her husband in control, and putting an end to the deadlock that may have all but destroyed their marriage. Her expiation involves subjecting herself to

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his judgment, but also to his compassion and love. Her feelings of rejection are ended as much with the force of a spanking or a commanding look as with a kiss, her subjection a new denouement, as she collapses in love in his arms.²⁸⁵

skillfully and helps me to work through and open my emotional barriers. He says it is about evolving.

I am on a journey to greater depths of love.²⁸⁶

"CROSSING A HURDLE" (6 DECEMBER 2006)

Darn, he got me again! My guy did. I have been struggling with identifying some feelings. He has been understanding, aware of where I have been and who I am. I have felt a malaise yet didn't know how to identify it. He knew it too, so he finally, after a long wait of patience, put the cards on the table. For me.

He gave a little space I hadn't asked for. It made me gravitate, unsure, closer. Then he asked me to talk. He asked me what is in my mind. What do I want?

He asked enough for me to respond and reveal. He helped me to identify how much I love him. He seemed satisfied with my openness. Then he backed off again, just for a day, yet it was long enough for me to spend the day wound up in thoughts of him and thoughts of what I want. Then he called, sounding like always. Helping me through what felt like an awkward "hello".

He knows, I know he knows, that he shook me. That he needed to. Me, skilled at burying emotion behind a smile and looking cucumber cool to the world. He helped me to communicate.

Why does he make me feel so different? He moves me gently, yet

"IS TAKING HIS WIFE IN HAND SELF-SACRIFICING FOR THE MAN?" (12 DECEMBER 2006)

[This is an FAQ question (answers to frequently-asked questions). Please ensure that your post answers the question. ...]

Is taking his wife in hand self-sacrificing for the man?

It is sometimes argued that Taken In Hand requires arduous self-sacrifice on the part of the husband. Some imagine long-suffering men sacrificing their wishes and bearing a heavy burden of responsibility. The way some women talk about what they want from their husbands, I can understand this idea. But the bottom line is that if it feels like a burden to the man—if he feels the need to grit his teeth and sacrifice nobly to take his wife in hand—then unless he has a touch of the masochist about him and on some level enjoys this suffering of his, I do not think such a man should be taking his wife in hand.

This is not to say that the man must be one of those alpha-male-from-birth types: plenty of men grow into a Taken In Hand relationship once they become aware that their wife wants that. But if the man is having to be a martyr, Taken In Hand is not for him.

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In a Taken In Hand relationship, neither husband nor wife experiences the Taken In Hand aspect of their relationship as a burden or as requiring unpleasant self-sacrifice. Self-sacrifice that feels bad jeopardises and destroys relationships.²⁸⁷

"IMAGINING MY MARRIAGE AS ONE LONG ROAD-TRIP" (13 DECEMBER 2006)

My own personal ideal relationship, although it would contain the element of male leadership, would never be a situation wherein I had absolutely no control at all. Now if life was a fairy-tale then that would be possible. But life isn't a fairy-tale. Realistically speaking, the older I get, the less I trust other people - even my husband- in regards to always knowing what all is best for me.

Besides the fact that each of us is a very unique, complex and evolving individual with often deep and changing needs, I do very much believe in freedom, and would not be able to throw that precious gift away so completely.

It is male leadership that I desire, and a few other interesting things, but not in an extreme sense of him directing arbitrarily over every aspect of my life. I couldn't agree to a relationship wherein a man said to me "You will do whatever I say, whenever I say, however I say, and that is all there is to it!" That just wouldn't work for me. Sure I've fantasized about that, and perhaps at some point in my younger years may even have been willing to agree

to it, but I've done a lot of thinking about it since then.

If I could explain it in an analogy, I'd say that my ideal relationship would be like a long road-trip in some ways. When my husband and I go somewhere, we both decide together where we're going to go. We decide together on the best route. We plan together what we're going to do when we get there, what we want to accomplish, and we try to plan something for everyone. All of this is done together.

The kicker here is, he always drives. On our typical seven or eight hour trip, I might drive an hour, I might not drive at all. Very rarely he will take a short nap. Generally speaking he doesn't want me to drive. But he does want me to keep the kids content and when necessary quiet, and he likes me to do a few other things that help make the trip more pleasant. This of course was a lot more fun before we had children.

The point is though, that at any time on our road trip I could very well say "Pull over", and he would. I could say let's turn around and go back home and forget this trip, and he'd at least consider it. If I begged him—or bugged him—he might consent to let me drive even if he didn't want to take a break. I am not sure of that, to be honest, as it's never happened. Ideally of course, well he might. And theoretically, I could get out of the car and walk away at any time. I can't really imagine him letting me do that on a road-trip though. He'd probably throw me in the car—or even the trunk if necessary—and bring me back home and then let me leave if I was determined

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to do so. Of course for my own good, if for no other reason.

Other than that it is pretty much the same as how we conduct our marriage. Never am I in a position wherein I have no input or influence over what I am going to do or what he is going to do to me. Well okay that's not true. But speaking non-sexually, I am never in a position wherein I have no input or influence over our actions. And I do reckon that even sexually, while in one of those short-term sexual positions of no control, I do still have influence. Even if the exact situation wasn't pre-discussed, my limits are respected.

Commonly, I hear these assumptions that domestic discipline or male leadership equals slavery or oppression or abuse. That is just so far from the reality of it for us, and for many others who live according to this lifestyle -most others I think.

Now there are situations wherein it might *appear* that I have no control, such as when my husband may decide I need discipline, and I may be reluctant at that time to comply. So to onlookers—who generally don't exist—it would appear that he is forcing me to accept it, or that his words or actions are demeaning rather than helpful and pleasurably appreciated reminders, but the simple truth in my own marriage is that in discussion we have agreed that he can't let me get away with developing unhealthy or displeasing habits.

Even as I am angry and defiant, or wheedling as the case may be, I am glad that he is taking control, and glad that my downward spiral has been noticed and stopped. I do real-

ize that not all women who practice domestic discipline really have such severe behavioral problems and lack of self-discipline as I and some others do, but none of us are always perfect. For me, I am a weak-willed person. I have trouble doing what I plan to do. I have little self-control, and I see nothing wrong with admitting this and asking for my partner's help in overcoming the problem.

Some people have indicated to me that they feel this is somehow an unfair burden to a man, but I cannot really understand why. I don't view successful long-term marital relationships as being all about fun, all of the time. I would think that two people in love would be eager to help ensure the well-being of the other.

No, this could never be a one-way thing. Well I guess it could, but that wouldn't be very successful, or very satisfying to both partners, heavy masochists possibly excluded. I spend my days doing things for my husband, things to make his life more pleasant, less demanding, less stressful. I force vitamins on him, since I'm a not very great meal-planner, and I watch his salt intake and on many an occasion I have talked him out of doing ridiculously dangerous things, like the time he wanted to set up a ladder next to the pool and use it as a high dive platform.

These things aren't really due to our domestic discipline arrangement, it's just the way it's always been. He's always tried to help me with my weak areas and look out for me and encourage me and I've always done the same for him. Now

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however some things we just do differently, in ways which are more effective for us, not to mention more enjoyable. The smoother our marriage runs, and the more time we spend together "enjoying" ourselves, the closer we become. With the trust factor in active obvious play on a regular basis, the relationship becomes more honest, and more intimate.

Indeed, it is killing two birds with one stone, so to speak. Problems within the relationship are being effectively handled, and -for us- it's healthy for the relationship and great fun!

If the government of our marriage was divided into three sections, legislative, judicial and executive, I would say that he has by mutual agreement been given the judicial role, acting as the cop and sentencer. We're both legislators, deciding what is important and what is unacceptable, and we're both actively executing the plan, but he is the only "cop" so to speak.

Now, here would seem to be an imbalance. Who polices him? Who disciplines him when he screws up? Nobody. Depending on the top involved, the seriousness of that imbalance would vary. However, there are other things which can be done to influence his behavior, less direct, gentler approaches to motivating him and helping to correct his own veerings from the path of marital health and harmony. For him, and perhaps for many men, these less aggressive approaches are much more effective anyway.

So then there really is no imbalance at all, no abuse, no oppression,

and no slavery, just differing approaches. Just two people in love who decided together to interact with each other in ways which make our own personal relationship ever so much more satisfying to us both.²⁸⁸

"THE PASSION OF THE TANGO" (18 DECEMBER 2006)

A long, long time ago in my mother's village we danced the wild tango! During the summer months there was always a religious festival and on Saturday nights one could always find a village with yet another religious festival with an evening dance, sometimes just the tango and sometimes also the waltz, rumba, samba and mambo.

When the heavy rhythm of a tango commenced the people would scream: Tango! Tango! And everyone rushed to the wooden platform that was intentionally erected in the village square, that was flanked by multicolored lights and that was crowned with a bonfire that seemed to swallow the sky.

To suggest to these people of a time now largely lost that they should take a lesson to teach them to dance was as absurd as asking them to take lessons on how to eat the magnificent roasted meats and drink the moonshine that was freely available at all the festivals. These people were born with the dance in their blood. Everyone danced without prejudice from age 4 to age 90.

These were villages that had known great poverty and even starvation, they had endured every

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plague including the plague of the Nazis and when they came to the dance they used the dance to purge all the sorrow and to embrace the great joy of the wild dance.

There was no permission needed; one approached the partner without words and stood in front of them and extended the hand and there was rarely a refusal.

I was a teenage girl and I remember one partner in particular. He was a stout man with beaming eyes who was at least a foot shorter than me. I remember him because he tossed me violently, with great force, so great a force that I could not break from him. We danced from 9 at night to 5 in the morning, till the dawn broke the sky and this was the custom with everyone.

We never spoke or exchanged names, but of course I remember his intense gaze since it became my focal point and all the world faded other than his eyes. I was challenged to maintain form, to shape the circuitry of space with perfection, to add the elegance to the extreme edge that his rhythmic inertia commanded. It was my job to punctuate this force with elaborate precision.

Here there were no judgments and no [cliché's]. Who was dominant or submissive and who led or who followed was not in the least important. There were no leaders or followers and no one crashed with any other dancer. It was a sublime synergy and the only leader was the music, the fire, and the blazing starry sky. It was a return to the primal and a complete state of surrender by all the dancers, young, and old male and female.

These dancers all moved rapidly around what seemed an endless center. They merged with their partners and with all the partners. There was an instinct, a prescience of motion evoked; it was the mass rapid motion that drove them, called them, the rhythm forced them to obey, everyone was mesmerized, it was one great unit spiraling through time/space.

I remember most my mother who at one of the dances broke free of her partner and stole the Barrett of another man and performed a soliloquy of dance in perfect time arriving back to her partner without hesitation or the missing of a second. My mother loved the dance above all else and she has won many ribbons during the Second World War.

This is what I miss the most, as there is not such dancing here in NYC. Of course I know that there are tangos but the dancers are so choreographed, so feigned, so forced, so pale and bloodless, and so alien to my original experience that they are an atrocity to me.²⁸⁹

"IT'S NOT BECAUSE HE'S INFALLIBLE" (27 DECEMBER 2006)

A question often asked is how, in Taken In Hand relationships in which there is an element of corporal discipline, do the husband and wife think about the fallibility of the husband? Is he deemed infallible? Is there an assumption that the woman is more fallible than the man? If not, why is the punishment all one way?

The reason why I get spanked and my husband doesn't is that I like

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being spanked and he doesn't. It has nothing to do with him being infallible, which he certainly isn't, and I find that an appalling notion. I have never met an infallible man and wouldn't want to. I know men like that exist in DD fiction, but such a perfect creature would be extremely trying to have about the house in real life.

I would simply hate having to spank my husband. It would make me feel very uncomfortable and embarrassed and it would also be a big turn-off for me. If he felt that way about spanking me it would be a serious problem for us, but happily for me he doesn't. It gives him satisfaction to wallop me when I've done something that annoys him, whereas it wouldn't give me any satisfaction to whack him if he'd annoyed me. And he would absolutely hate it.

It's not about him being better than me, or not ever making mistakes. It's about what suits us. I totally agree with the person (I think it was fortysomethingwife) who said "If our positions were reversed I could find as many reasons to spank him as he does to spank me." It's purely about fulfilling our personal needs; it has nothing to do with him being infallible – God forbid.²⁹⁰

"HIS WORD IS FINAL" (1 JANUARY 2007)

As the woman within a Taken In Hand relationship, I prefer having things understood clearly from the start. If I have decided that this is the man whom I want to lead our relationship, if I trust him in that way, then to my mind, I will accept all of

the decisions that he makes regardless of whether I agree with those decisions or not. It's as simple as that.

Whenever I say things like this, there are always folks who will bring up extreme examples, such as "What if his decision puts you or your children in harm's way?" Frankly, that is another issue altogether. I was in a long term relationship with a gentle Alpha man who descended into mental illness – schizophrenia, to be exact – over the course of two years. Prior to his becoming mentally ill, and ultimately taking his own life, I deferred to him in all matters, and I never regretted doing so. However, when it became apparent that he was not mentally capable of making responsible decisions, I had to make those decisions on my own, and I openly refused to go along with many of his edicts because they were not the product of a mentally healthy mind.

So when I say that I will accept all of the decisions that my dominant partner makes, I certainly exclude extreme examples such as the example above – which as I said, I experienced first hand. I am not incapable of "taking charge" of my own life when need be, and there is no one who would call me a doormat. I am an intelligent, well-educated, thoughtful woman who has taken care of herself just fine for most of her adult life.

But within a Taken In Hand relationship, I want it to be perfectly clear, and understood between the two of us, that his word is final. Difficult, sure, these days, when we are all counselled to be independent, to

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make our own decisions, to stand on our own two feet, to be “assertive.” Difficult also when you have a rather strong will of your own, LOL. But not impossible, especially when you have chosen a man who respects you, listens to you, takes your thoughts, your opinions seriously, and at the same time, takes his own responsibility to lead the relationship seriously.

I believe with all my heart that when a woman within a Taken In Hand relationship fully submits to the authority of the man in her life – the man whom she has chosen, the man whom she has recognized as trustworthy, the man who keeps her best interests in mind when making decisions that affect her – when she fully submits to his decisions, their bond can grow, and their relationship can flourish.²⁹¹

“THE KING OF THE DARK CHAMBER, BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE: A BOOK REVIEW” (4 JANUARY 2007)

It was during my undergraduate years that I was first introduced to *The King of the Dark Chamber*,* a play written by Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengalese Nobel Laureate. Like many profound pieces of fiction, I was perhaps too young at that time to fully appreciate and grasp its great wisdom beyond a mere intellectual level – that is until now. The

play is an allegory of an individual’s spiritual and personal awakening in their quest for beauty and truth. For some of those living or interested in male-led committed, monogamous relationships many of the themes yield useful insights that can be understood and applied within the Taken In Hand framework.

Among many of the play’s themes, the relationship between Sudarshana, the Queen and the King is symbolic for the relationship between man and the Divine; and for some, a romantic relationship between two equally powerful individuals. The King of the title is unseen by his subjects, some of whom question his existence, while others such as the maidservant Surangama are so loyal and worshipful to him that they do not even request to see him. The subjects have no need for proof of the King’s existence; they believe him to be real and great. Only those who have disarmed their own pride in subjection to their King know him. They have a sense of when the King is nearing and when he is present.

Act II

SUDARSHANA. How can you perceive when he comes?

SURANGAMA. I cannot say: I seem to hear his footsteps in my own heart. Being his servant of this dark chamber, I have developed a sense-I can know and feel without seeing.

SUDARSHANA. Would that I had this sense too, Surangama!

SURANGAMA. You will have it, O Queen ... this sense will awaken in you one day. Your longing to have a

* 1) Tagore, Rabindranath, *The King of the Dark Chamber*: (trans. by Drama League of America): published by Asia Book Corp of America, September 1914.

2) Donne, John., *Meditation XVII*

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sight of him makes you restless, and therefore all your mind is strained and warped in that direction. When you are past this state of feverish restlessness, everything will become quite easy.

SUDARSHANA. How is it that it is easy to you, who are a servant, and so difficult to me, the Queen?

SURANGAMA. It is because I am a mere servant that no difficulty baulks me... As soon as I bent all my mind to my task, a power woke and grew within me, and mastered every part of me unopposed.

It is through a process of the humbling and subjugation (consensual) of the King's wife, Sudarshana, that the play describes her journey of self-discovery and spiritual awakening. Sudarshana is initially depicted as a proud, yet immature queen, bemoaning the cruelty of her husband, whom she can only meet in a room that is kept forever dark. She desperately aches to see and know him, and out of that yearning falls in love with another king, whom she meets in the world outside and mistakes for her husband. It is only when she has been humbled through a series of mistakes to complete despair and has cast away her pride, that she can be reconciled with her real husband, before whom she now bows with servility. Only when Sudarshana is brought down to the level of the servant can she become the Enlightened Queen. In an expression of perfect paradox, it is through her decision to serve her husband, that she becomes powerful and beautiful. Viewed within the context of a Taken In Hand relationship, these insights may be evident

and applicable for some couples. According to some perspectives, a woman's granted submission to serve her husband empowers him to step into the light with her, serve her, and lead himself, his family, work, and community with wisdom, strength and magnanimity.

Act XX

SUDARSHANA. You are not beautiful, my lord—you stand beyond all comparisons!

KING. That which can be comparable with me lies within yourself.

SUDARSHANA. If this be so, then that too is beyond comparison. Your love lives in me—you are mirrored in that love, and you see your face reflected in me: nothing of this mine, it is all yours, O lord!

KING. I open the doors of this dark room to-day-the game is finished here! Come, come with me now, come outside into the light!

Additionally, the play reveals a subtle, powerful phenomenological discourse between the act of seeing and not seeing. Are the invisible and unseen qualities of the King a powerful manifestation of his divinity; or is the act of seeing a curse from which one must first be blind in order to genuinely see? Must the Queen first be humbled to serve in order for her to recognize and see the divine qualities within herself? Was this not what the King had to first endure before he himself was elevated to his majestic status?

Act II

SUDARSHANA. What do you see?

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KING. I see that the darkness of the infinite heavens, whirled into life and being by the power of my love, has drawn the light of a myriad stars into itself, and incarnated itself in a form of flesh and blood. And in that form, what aeons of thought and striving, untold yearnings of limitless skies, the countless gifts of unnumbered seasons!

SUDARSHANA. Am I so wonderful, so beautiful? When I hear you speak so, my heart swells with gladness and pride. But how can I believe the wonderful things you tell me? I cannot find them in myself!

KING. Your own mirror will not reflect them—it lessens you, limits you, makes you look small and insignificant. But could you see yourself mirrored in my own mind, how grand would you appear! In my own heart you are no longer the daily individual which you think you are—you are verily my second self.

And so the reader is left asking the question is that which is beyond all comparison within us or not? What do we need to do in order to see it? Do we find someone to mirror us OR peer into ourselves with eyes wide open and see it reflected within ourselves? Perhaps the answer is not “either/or” but both. Those qualities which are “beyond divinely comparison” already exist within us. To find and achieve that wholeness, one must search for and recognize that which is great and divine within ourselves and acknowledge our need for others to mirror it back to us. Taken a step further, one might also conclude that in recognizing our dependence on others to mirror

us, one must understand the magnitude of power it confers upon the other individual. In the words of John Donne, “No man is an island unto himself.” Some women will assert that many dominant men (particularly those who are wise and self-reflective) living in Taken In Hand relationships understand this truth on some emotional and spiritual level. His Queen can make and even hurt him on some level, admitted or not. For some men, it may be imperative for him to first discern the nature of a woman’s heart before committing. For others, it is a non sequitur. For some women, a demonstration of the man’s worthiness and trust is necessary before embarking on a momentous relationship. For others, a moot point. Whatever the case may be, human beings are unique, fallible (this includes wise, strong men and women) and ultimately self-responsible.* In sum, strive to know yourself and in the process choose wisely from among the individuals available to mirror you.²⁹²

“LIVING THE FANTASY 24/7” (6 JANUARY 2007)

When the subject of husbands controlling and taking their wives in hand comes up, some men imagine that that must mean that they will be expected to play a rather exhausting part all day long. “I just don't want

* [EDITOR'S NOTE TO THE WRITER OF THIS REVIEW: If you give me a name I will attribute this article accordingly.]

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to live that fantasy all day long", said Melguy.

If by that Melguy meant that you have got to be dominant and in control *all* the time while in a Taken In Hand relationship, then I don't think you do. A lot of the time my husband isn't actually being dominant, he is naturally very bossy about the things that are important to him, but a lot of other things he doesn't care about at all and is mostly very laid-back about. And a lot of the time we relate to each other just like normal people, without any element of Taken In Hand being involved. Neither of us really is being dominant or submissive when we're going round Sainsbury's doing the shopping for instance. Listening to our conversations about "What would you like for dinner?" "I don't know – what would you like?" nobody would get the impression that either one of us was dominant. But if I get in a sulky or petulant mood, then he'll become dominant instantly, even in Sainsbury's. It just comes naturally to him to become assertive when I "get above [my]self" as he puts it, or when it's something he really cares about.

Most of the time my husband is just "getting on with life doing the 101 things that need to be done or relaxing", as Melguy put it. Nevertheless in a sense my husband is in control 24/7 because I am always aware of the undercurrent, and the fact that his dominance will come to the surface should the need arise. This gives life an added spice and interest. He isn't constantly telling me what to do, but he does tell me what to do when it comes to things

that matter to him. If there are things that don't matter to him then he doesn't bother. You don't have to be "doing it" 24/7 in order to have a Taken In Hand relationship, but I do need to know that my husband will assert himself should the need arise. In that sense it is 24/7: though he isn't actively dominant all the time, the potential is always there.²⁹³

"HOW TAKEN IN HAND MAKES THE MUNDANE EROTIC" (20 JANUARY 2007)

Some readers question whether Taken In Hand can make the mundane erotic. Undoubtedly it can.

What makes anything erotic is the dynamic surrounding it. For Taken In Hand people the power dynamic is what causes the erotic feelings/tensions. That tension and subsequent release is what causes the pleasure. Fear, pain and pleasure are on the same neural circuits. For some, increasing pain also increases pleasure.

Fear works the same way. Threat of punishment induces fear. If there are loving pleasurable thoughts present, then they increase in the presence of fear. This is part of the Taken In Hand dynamic.

Another part of the Taken In Hand dynamic that speaks to the mundane is that there is order. When things are ordered they are comfortable. Using fear to create order increases pleasure and comfort.²⁹⁴

"THIS MAN'S AUTHORITY JUST IS" (22 JANUARY 2007)

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Until recently I thought an [‘equal’]® relationship was the ideal. The thought of obeying was foreign to me. The man as the authority? Head of the household? Wearing the pants? Hah!

Then, at age 45 and with four teenagers, I met the man who is now in my life. He is undoubtedly different from the others. On one hand, he is strong, confident, firm, and direct. My father, when he met this man, warned me: [he’ll] take crap from no one, including you. And my father was right. But on the other hand, this man is warm, caring, gentle, and giving. [I’ve] never before been treated with such tenderness.

He made it clear early in our relationship that he must be the leader. Slowly, as I have learned more about him, I have become more comfortable with him in that role. He [doesn’t] give me overt orders or demand my obedience in any way. He simply acts with authority—and leaves the rest to me!

The interesting thing about all this is that I have never yearned to be obedient nor do I actually feel obedient—but to him, in this relationship, I AM obedient. He expects me to follow his lead, and (oddly, it still seems to me) I do, usually gratefully. I feel incredibly satisfied when I please him, and I am more content than [I’ve] ever been in an [‘equal’]® partnership.

He does not tell me what to wear; yet, [I’ve] subtly changed my wardrobe to better suit his tastes. He does not tell me not to curse; yet, [I’ve] given it up because he views such language from a lady as unbecom-

ing. When he tells me of a decision (i.e., [we’ll] not meet for lunch today because the snow has made the roads dangerous), I listen and agree. In other words, I am willfully obedient and respect his authority.

Do I ever question his decisions? Yes. He encourages me to do so, telling me that [it’s] my job to help him make decisions that are right for both of us. He wants my input and appreciates me for it.

Yet I have never questioned his authority. Somehow, it just is.²⁹⁵

“AN EXPRESSION OF HIS AUTHORITY” (22 JANUARY 2007)

I have a problem with my temper. I can *usually* keep it in check. But there have been times, in previous relationships, where I’ve lost control and said hateful things I didn’t mean (and later couldn’t take back). I’ve got a *much* better rein on my temper than I once had—but sadly, it has cost me several relationships. :-(

In the past, partners of mine have reacted in one of three ways when I’ve lost my temper/yelled at them:

1. By yelling back (thereby adding to the discord and potentially saying things *they* didn’t mean and later wished they could take back.

2. By walking away and refusing to argue.

3. By apologizing (even if they had nothing to apologize for).

For many women, the course of action that would bring about the quickest end to the argument would be for the man to either apologize or walk away. Not so with me. Shouting back at me would likely only

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prompt me to shout louder. Walking away or apologizing might seem like the most sensible thing to do, given the circumstances. But I, for whatever reason, would perceive it as weakness on the part of the man. In truth, the man might be displaying a—tremendous—amount of control by walking away from the situation. But I wouldn't see it that way—at least, not at that time. I'd almost certainly continue to argue if I could. If not, I'd likely resurrect the argument at a later time, as I'd see it as being unresolved.

Worse yet would be apologizing, especially if the man hadn't done anything that warrants it. The animal in me would interpret it as backing down—and in response, I'd find myself going for the jugular; attacking even more viciously than before.

(I'm really embarrassed to admit to having acted like this in the past. I've just read through what I've written so far and it sounds horrible. Please understand that this is a rare example of me at my very worst—the part of me I do my utmost to control.)

Now, what if my partner, instead of reacting in one of the above three ways, had employed option four—asserting his authority/maleness/dominance over me? (To be fair, I hadn't ceded authority to these previous partners I mentioned, so they may not have thought it a viable option.)

What if my partner, instead of walking away, had (by *picking me up and physically moving me*, if necessary) put me in a room by myself to cool down? I wouldn't have viewed *that* as a display of weakness. He would have stood his

ground, instead removing *me* from the equation.

Granted, keeping me isolated in a room when I have a mind to continue the argument would be a challenge. There, I suppose, the man would have to either lock me in until I could respond *reasonably* or threaten to further assert his authority. It probably wouldn't take much for me to back down—maybe just a verbal warning. Something to the effect of “I'm not interested in arguing. If you insist on continuing this, I will put an end to it in a way that you won't find pleasant.” If said calmly and reasonably (perhaps even if said in anger) it would likely take all the wind out of my sails. He'd have “bared his teeth” at me, and I, being the smaller and weaker animal, would have (sensibly) backed down.

I would have to believe that he would make good on his threat in order for it to work. But work it certainly would! If, god forbid, I still had sufficient fight left in me to continue the argument, he'd have to be willing and able to overpower me and force me to comply. (But heaven help the man who couldn't, as I'm only 4'10"!)

In this case, while spanking me could be seen as punishment for arguing, I'd see it more as an assertion of his authority. A might-and-inherent-maleness-makes-right type of thing. A “gentle nip” to remind me that I've overstepped my bounds. (Not only his, but my own self-imposed boundaries.)

In taking control of the situation he would essentially (if not directly) be saying: “I care about our relationship too much to allow you to jeop-

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ardize it." He'd be demonstrating his willingness to cause me minor discomfort, if necessary, to circumvent the truly bad stuff—the fighting, name-calling and resulting hurt feelings, which could lead to eventual deterioration of the relationship. Wow! To me, that's heady stuff. It doesn't get much more romantic than that. :-)²⁹⁶

"RE MORSEFUL" (24 JANUARY 2007)

I have often remarked that spanking does not change my behaviour permanently, and that I have no faith in spanking as a permanent cure for negative behaviour. However, there have been a few occasions when something I have done has so infuriated my husband that I have definitely decided that I had better not do whatever it was ever again, or else. What makes me decide this is not so much the force of the spanking, as the force of the fury behind it. One such occasion occurred yesterday afternoon.

I was glued to the TV watching Inspector Morse. He Who Must Be Obeyed was in the kitchen cooking hamburgers for tea. He came into the living room to ask me how I wanted my hamburgers cooked, about ten minutes before the end of Morse, just when Morse and Lewis were confronting the second murderer. I, not caring in the least how my burgers were cooked, and just wanting to hear what Morse and Lewis were saying, flapped my hand at him in a shushing gesture.

He went through the roof. I haven't seen him that angry for months.

When he calmed down slightly, he informed me, grimly, that the dial on the Spankometre was set firmly to "Severely Pissed Off". I had a few hours to contemplate the fact that I hadn't actually had a 'severely pissed off' spanking for months, and that I had begun to wonder if perhaps we had reached such a state of harmony that I was never going to get one again. Fate always seems to take a hand at time like that, to remind me not to get complacent about things.

Well, when we had got the children settled and went up to bed, he told me to go and get the steel ruler, then go in the bathroom and damp my bottom down. The spanking that followed was long, hard and extremely painful, I was surprised to find afterwards that I hadn't actually bitten through the pillow, he applied the ruler with extreme vigour and with undiminished energy. "When I ask you a question I expect to get a respectful answer" he informed me, "You will NOT make dismissive gestures at me when I ask you something" etc etc. By the time he had finished I was in the state of outward agony and inward tranquility that I always am in after a really harsh spanking. And there won't be any more dismissive hand gestures from me. That one has definitely sunk in. I feel that that bit of negative behaviour is cured.²⁹⁷

"LESSONS FROM MY MARRIAGE FOR WIVES WANTING THEIR HUSBAND TO TAKE THEM IN HAND" (26 JANUARY 2007)

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Wives who want their husbands to take them in hand sometimes make mistakes that jeopardize their goal. It often sounds to me like they have not really given control over to their spouse. They print out articles from Taken In Hand that appealed to them. They sometimes even make up a contract of behaviors they want or need to change and ask their husband to sign off on it. They drop big hints to their husband to get him to punish them. Worse, some women behave badly in the hope of discipline. They get frustrated when their husband doesn't behave the way *they* want him to.

If you are a woman wanting your husband to take you in hand, and he's willing to do so or at least hasn't pushed your ideas away, then the two of you might be able to put together a Taken In Hand relationship. But for your husband to take you in hand, you have to stop telling him what to do. If you want him to be the captain of the ship, you have to let him take the wheel. Send your husband to the Taken In Hand site. Print out articles that *don't* appeal to you as well as some that do, and discuss them with him if he is willing. Let him get as much knowledge and feeling for a Taken In Hand relationship as you can. Then sit and talk about what you need and what you want. Make sure you can differentiate the two. But talk about it as two adults, and when neither of you is upset. Let him come up with his own plan of action to ease into a new dynamic for the two of you.

Here are a few pieces of advice from my own marriage and experiences in "converting" my husband

to someone interested in this kind of relationship.

1) Men like to fix things. If you go to your man and tell him what's broken (i.e., what needs you have that aren't being met) it is in his basic makeup to want to fix that. And there's a very good chance that he'll come up with a plan or dynamic that will suit you quite well, even if it looks nothing like what you are currently imagining. But going to a man with a bunch of articles and a pre-written contract is not going to appeal to his dominant nature. That's basically handing him a script, saying "Please behave more dominantly, just like this says. Thanks!" If he needs more input or insight into your desires, try talking or writing about fantasies. But giving a man directions on how to take charge just seems to go against the grain of both what you want, and their basic nature.

2) Go slowly. When you are just starting a Taken In Hand relationship, things can get really hot and steamy. This heat and intimacy is precisely why most of us seek out this kind of relationship. But my experience has been that if it gets too hot too fast, that you can't sustain that level of intensity over a long haul, and the relationship starts to fizzle and burn. Rather than going for the gusto on day one, try easing into a new dynamic in your relationship. If it fizzles from going too fast, you can damage the relationship you already have. But by letting both of you work into a new dynamic at your own paces (even if his is slower than yours!), you can keep what you have and improve on it.

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3) A lot of us are creatures of habit, and are slow to change. Even if your husband comes up with the best plan in the world, it may take some time for allowing his natural dominance to be at the forefront of his dealings with you to become a habit. He will slip, as will you. Don't slip for the sake of punishment. If you need to be punished, talk to him about your need. Don't try to misbehave into getting one, as that's just trying to wrest control back. If he's agreed to some sort of discipline, and falters, once your feelings are no longer bruised, point out to him what happened and tell him how you wished he had handled it. But try to refrain from telling him what to do all the time to keep you happy.

4) Try to live with his decisions and punishments, even if you don't like them. That's kinda the point of a punishment, is it not?

Good luck with changing your relationship.²⁹⁸

"WHY WE REJECTED RULES AND PUNISHMENT IN OUR TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP" (6 FEBRUARY 2007)

We're very happy and our relationship has been what you might term a Taken In Hand or "traditional with extras" one for about 5 years. How has our relationship evolved over that time?

Like many others, we started out with a lot of rules and so forth but gradually that all changed. Now it's as natural as breathing for me to look up to my husband as the leader in almost everything. I don't need

reminders or limits or punishments; it's just who we are.

Frankly, we didn't do well with that whole punishment-rules routine we started with. It didn't last very long. I already had a burning desire to make my husband happy so when I'd fail him in some way, I'd feel so horrible, it was far worse than the punishment.

Even though he was wonderful about praising me afterwards and all that. He was doing everything *right*, I just couldn't cope, not with my type of personality.

I started to spiral into a wife who jumped with alarm whenever he'd be upset about anything, even if it wasn't about me. This made him very distraught and terribly unhappy with himself since he loves me to pieces and the very last thing he ever wanted was for me to get jumpy or afraid of him. He wanted me to feel completely secure and well-loved. He would immediately stop and call me to him when he'd see me upset and stroke me, calming me.

But knowing that he could physically punish me at any moment if I blew it somehow definitely did *not* make me feel secure at all but quite the opposite.

So after much talking (well, mostly me opening up more to him in one really long talk one night, though I resisted being totally honest because I wasn't sure I wanted to give it up—some of it was great—but after he heard me out, he insisted on changing some of it) my husband and I relegated all smacks and so-called "punishments" to bedroom play only and it's quite enjoyable now.

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In the marriage, I still defer to him as I would a superior officer who is also a good friend, but I still have my say, too. In the bedroom, my role is far different since that is where most of these desires came from in the first place. I am very subservient sexually and he is very demanding of me but we enjoy that. A LOT!

Things have changed since the beginning: it's gotten much better.

It's best to roll with the punches with this kind of thing and figure out what truly makes you both happy.* That's all that matters.²⁹⁹

"SHE MAY NOT KNOW IT YET, BUT I'M TAKING HER IN HAND" (6 FEBRUARY 2007)

We have just begun our Taken In Hand relationship, my wife and I. She doesn't yet know she's in a Taken In Hand relationship. We've been married for over six years. And I can only describe our existence together until now as annoying! In a lot of respects I am a traditionalist. And she is too. We have both had our internal struggles regarding the roles of men and women in society and marriage. And our struggles—due to societal pressures—have caused us quite a bit of trouble.

That part of me that desires to be distinctly male and masculine has always been met with society's pressure to be soft and gentle and tender. I can be all of those things—and

have been—and even enjoy being them. The problem is that the assertive, aggressive problem-solving part of me, that is, the real and true me—has no place to express itself when problems arose in our marriage. It seems I couldn't get my wife to comply with my requests—no matter how many times I made a particular request gently and sweetly and lovingly—until I raised my voice!

She would then feel bad for forgetting and I would feel bad for yelling. We would both hibernate until we could effectively and emotionally sweep the unsolved issue under the rug. Sometimes we would be gone for a day or more. This facilitated growing resentment. She was an expert at walking over the humps in the rug—seemingly without feeling a thing. And my emotional feet were sensitive. I couldn't take a single step without feeling the slightest discomfort from unsolved pebbles.

The part of her that desires to be distinctly female and feminine has been met with the same kind of pressure for independence and aggressiveness (as opposed to assertiveness: an excellent trait). The imposition has caused her confusion and lots self-esteem issues. And too many a time she wondered out loud, often and seriously, "Why do you love me?" Boy oh boy what a mountain to climb!

Well, just as I was about to become resigned to the fact that this was the way it was going to be for the rest of my life (I convinced myself that most if not all marriages are probably this way), I stumbled upon your website. I was looking for something

* [EDITOR'S NOTE TO THE WRITER: If you let me know that you wrote this article and give me a byline (name) to apply to it I will attribute your article accordingly.]

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on self-discipline and as I search I was eventually wallowing in the myriad of spanking sites on the internet.

My wife had asked me to spank her about a year ago so that was running through my mind as I surfed. But when I spanked her last year it was so against the grain of everything that I had been taught at home and in society, that I was very uncomfortable with it. Yet I was intrigued—and excited at these images. But I confess this stuff was much too strong for me. I love my wife and I didn't want her to lose herself. Result: the spanking thing ceased to be exciting for me because it seemed to me that it would be emotionally injurious to her.

But when I stumbled upon Taken In Hand I learned that I could (and should—and I do) love, cherish, respect and lead my wife and yet still give her the female charge she needed from a spanking while paradoxically receiving the male charge I needed.

One night we were sitting in the den. I had been hanging around your sight for a couple weeks. I was beginning to again appreciate my masculinity. I'd wanted to make a move on the first day but was a little too nervous. But this day—all of sudden—I heard myself saying, “— —, come over here” with a firm gentleness. I had her stand next to me as I sat on the sofa, and made it clear that I was going to spank her. I had her lay across my knees with her bare behind exposed. With shock (and excitement) she obediently (submissively) complied.

But it wasn't just her behind that was exposed. It was also her heart. And I considered it the greatest gift that a woman could give to her man. And that's exactly what I told her. And as I gently caressed her “heart” I told her how much I love her. I told her how much I cherish her. I told her how much protecting her heart was a privilege and that this deep exposure of her inner being would be protected for life and at all costs. I let her know that it has brought out the man in me and my desire is to protect the woman in her. And I meant and still mean every word of it.

After warming her up I proceeded to assert my authority as lover, leader and head of our household. I told her, “You are under new management.” To my surprise she said, “I like that!” She turned to face me and gave me the biggest, warmest, most connecting hug we had shared in a long, long time. The rest of that night is history a blind man can see!

It's been 6 weeks or so since we began a Taken In Hand relationship. We have not made any rules. But I have had to put my hand over her “heart” a couple of times a week. Both sexual excitement, connection and love; and because (we both agreed) she had disappointed me about something.

Prior to having this outlet for my natural masculine assertiveness, I would have been ticked off about every little thing. The pebbles that went under the rug prior to this aren't really pebbles anymore! They just don't seem as big as they used to. They are not spank-worthy. I

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think it would have been a mistake for me to make a bunch of rules spawned by these little things. I cherish and value her freedom. She respects and submits to my authority.

I am leaving Taken In Hand in the history on our computer hoping that one day she will stumble upon it. I'm curious as to how far she wants to go. It would seem odd for a man to introduce this style of love. But, I think, if we went no farther than where we are—we're doing OK. Darned OK!³⁰⁰

"TAKEN IN HAND THROUGH CHRONIC ILLNESS" (9 FEBRUARY 2007)

For many of us, once we found the Taken In Hand website, we felt we were home. Like many others, I have been in a taken in hand relationship since my husband and I were dating. We have now been married almost 22 years, are nearing 50 years of age, and have lived through the trials and demands of raising a family. (We still have one child, an 11 year old, at home). We have also lived through the day to day struggles of a chronic illness, (multiple sclerosis), which leaves us vulnerable to the knowledge that my husband's disease can at any time, turn our lives upside down. I feel the dynamics of our taken in hand relationship has preserved and strengthened our marriage through the tough times.

In our rural, Midwest area of the United States, taken in hand relationships are pretty common. We have many, many family friends who are farmers and ranchers who

have the "cowboy gentility" of the man protecting his wife and family. For generations, (including my grandparents), families were rather isolated and had to rely on each other. A woman, and children, learned early that their safety often relied upon obedience and faith in the man of the family. For a wife, this feeling of being protected and cherished deepens her love and in turn, she does all she can to reciprocate that love.

Of course, in our area, as in most cultures, a man derives his manhood by being the "man in the family" and taking control. If there is a problem, the man wants to fix it, just as it is in his nature to protect his family.

What happens, however, if a man loses his physical capacity to control, and can no longer physically "fix things"? With MS being an integral part of our lives, this is a question we have had to face. Most recently, my husband had a rather severe exacerbation about six years ago. This left him physically weak and mentally depressed and drained. How did I react? By taking control; of the household, the family, and anything I could which I felt would alleviate some of his stress. How did he react to this? He retreated and became frustrated, which in turn left us more and more distant to each other.

Until, one day, a spark lit in my brain, and I knew I had to give him back that control. So, I began by deferring to him, and when one of the kids had a problem, I would ask him what he felt, or direct the child to go to their father. Same for mundane household matters. This was also a

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huge relief for me, because doing it all myself was quite draining. He began being “the protector” again, and making me feel cherished by the chivalrous things he would do, considerate things such as scraping my car windows, filling my car with gas on cold days, walking on the side of traffic if we were walking along a street, etc., etc.

I also asked him to spank me again, (which had always been rather erotic for us, mostly as play), but as discipline. I had a couple areas in which I felt I had regressed, and he, as it were, was willing to apply his hand to my bare and vulnerable bottom. Really, it was just another way I was submitting and putting myself under his umbrella of protection. Discipline spanking has been, and still is, very rare with us, but I know it is there, and I know he is willing to apply it. Knowing he has that control is very erotic for me, and rekindled our love life!

A while back someone wrote asking about a taken in hand relationship when the male is impotent. We have had this problem, and quite a bit of it with us, I believe, is related to the fatigue that is inherent with his disease. Sure there are drugs to help with impotence, and they are wonderful, but sometimes daily life uses every bit of his energy. By always thinking of my needs, he never leaves me sexually frustrated, even if he is too tired to engage himself. (Get my drift?). Also, if he tells me he thinks I need a spanking, I immediately get weak in the knees, then very turned on! Believe me, even though he only uses his hand,

he knows how to spank and I know it will hurt!

If you met my husband, you would not know he has MS, as he has had no lasting physical vestiges of his exacerbations. Fatigue, however, is a huge manifestation, but can be overcome. We have rekindled our relationship, and perhaps saved it, by applying taken in hand principles, even though we didn't know at the time it had a name! Really, it's what came naturally!³⁰¹

“FASCINATING WOMANHOOD AND ME” (14 FEBRUARY 2007)

Well, I decided to take the advice of the charming lady who recently suggested that I should read *Fascinating Womanhood*, and I must say, having read it, that it exceeds all my expectations.

I knew that Mrs Andelin and I could never be soul-mates when I read Chapter 2 “The Ideal woman”. Mrs Andelin's idea of the ideal woman is a combination of Agnes Wickfield and Dora from *David Copperfield*. Great. The two women she wants me to emulate are the two women in all of English literature I despise the most. This was a discouraging start for me, and it gets no better as the book proceeds.

In the chapter “Accept Him at Face Value” she tells us we must put up with a man as he is and not try to change him. Very nice, except that she does not exchange the same courtesy to women. If you're a woman you've got to change, whether you like it or not. “Pressing a man to change can bring out a

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streak of rebellion in him" she says. And in women too, Mrs Andelin, in women too.

In the chapter "Admire Him" she suggests hanging on your husband's every word with rap attention. Unfortunately, if you have a husband like mine he will not be deceived by this. "You don't understand a bloody word I'm saying, do you?" he is apt to say to me severely when I am trying to show a bright interest in, say his latest piece of metalwork. Men are not all as easily fooled as Mrs Andelin seems to imagine.

In the chapter "The Leader" she tells us that the man must be leader in the family because the Bible says so. Mrs Andelin is strongly religious, and drags religion in to support her theories all the time. If you are not religious you may find this tiresome or irrelevant. In this chapter she says something that will be very familiar to Taken In Hand readers since it crops up on here quite often, "Any organisation to have smooth-running system, must have a leader. The family, a small group of people, must be organised to avoid chaos. It doesn't matter how large or small the family, there must be a leader to maintain order." To which my reply is always "Why?" I do not believe that a family must be like a business organisation, or must have a leader. You may prefer it like that, but I simply don't believe it is how it has to be. A man should lead, Mrs Andelin tells us, because women tend to vacillate. I'm not surprised: anyone would vacillate if they were striving to be both Agnes Wickfield and Dora at the same time. It's a wonder a woman doesn't have a

complete nervous breakdown, let alone vacillate, under those circumstances.

She continues in this chapter to discuss obedience. "When the wife sets an example of obedience to her husband, the children follow. It has not only immediate benefits, but far-reaching effects on their entire lives." I'm sorry, Mrs Andelin, but that is not always the case. Why, I have been a model of wifely obedience for the past two and a half years, but our children are completely unaffected by this, they pay no attention whatsoever to anything that is said to them, either by my husband or myself.

Then in Chapter 9, "The Protector" Mrs Andelin tells us that the man must protect his wife from dangers, such as rape-, abduction, vicious dogs, snakes (snakes feature very prominently in this book), high precipices, deep canyons etc. She also tells us that a man must protect his wife from "unreal dangers" such as spiders, mice and dark shadows. Well, I'm here to tell you Mrs Andelin, that I won't get any protection from spiders from MY husband—he's terrified of them. If a spider needs removing from the bath he sends for me to do it—he won't touch them. Likewise any snakes that might be around, he abominates them even more than spiders. Snakes are fortunately in short supply in the UK, but if any snakes do appear in my house, my husband won't be the one dealing with them, and what do you have to say about THAT, Mrs Andelin?

Chivalry is dead, Mrs Andelin tells us, because women have become

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efficient, capable, and able to kill their own snakes. She doesn't have anything to say about those societies in the world (and there are a lot of them) where women are regarded pretty much as beasts of burden and expected to do most of the heavy work that she says is the province of men. In her world-view, lack of chivalry in men is all the fault of women, that there are large areas of the world where the concept of chivalry does not exist at all is not her concern.

In the chapter "A Worthy Character" Mrs Andelin tells us that a woman must be BETTER than a man, so that he can put her on a pedestal and worship her. This of course is a Victorian ideal, but one that has always appalled me. who wants to be worshipped, and why? I would much rather be treated as a human being, and allowed to have a few faults and failings, than be considered as an angel who can do no wrong, that's too much of a strain to live up to. It's a frightful prospect to be up on that pedestal.

The chapter "The Domestic Goddess" I will pass over. Everyone who has read anything I have written on this site knows that I am not one of those, and am never going to be, so I won't weary you with going over all that again.

When we get to the chapter on "Femininity", Mrs Andelin gives it to us straight:

"Femininity is a gentle, tender quality found in a woman's appearance, manner, and nature. A feminine woman gives the impression of softness, and delicateness. She has a spirit of sweet submission, and a

dependency upon men for their care and protection. Nothing about her appears masculine — no male aggressiveness, competence, efficiency, fearlessness, strength, or the ability to kill her own snakes." (I told you there was a lot about snakes in this book).

Well, reading through that paragraph I felt a bit discouraged, because I couldn't actually see much in myself of either feminine or masculine qualities, I don't have the softness and delicateness, nor the competence and efficiency either. This is somewhat discouraging. And while I've never yet had to kill a snake, I don't even know if I could do that. Oh well, only time will tell.

Mrs Andelin admonishes women not to talk too much, and says that they should never be crude, vulgar, harsh or critical. "Avoid talking about people you dislike as you may be tempted to make an unkind remark" she says. Honestly, she doesn't want us to have ANY fun at all.

When she discusses characteristics of the feminine nature, she emphasises how fearful women are. women are afraid of thunder and lightning, strange noises, dark shadows, mice, and yes, of course, spiders. Men love to laugh at women's fears she says. But what if it's the man who is afraid? Does anyone on this site need to be told what would happen to me if I laughed at my husband's fear of spiders?

Another thing Mrs Andelin tells us a woman should do is to purr like a cat and coo like a pigeon, both at the same time apparently. Men find this fetching. So, in addition to every-

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thing else, you've got to be an animal impersonator as well.

Mrs Andelin is very much against women going out to work. She attributes most of society's ills to women working outside the home. A favourite passage from the Bible that she quotes often in the course of the book is Proverbs Chapter 31, the one about the good woman. However, curiously, Mrs Andelin does not appear to notice that the woman in Proverbs is a businesswoman as well as a housewife. "She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruits of her hand she planteth a vineyard. She maketh fine linen and selleth it, and delivereth girdles unto the merchant." it says. The woman is engaging in farming and trade, but curiously Mrs Andelin chooses to overlook that point.

When it comes to expressing anger, Mrs Andelin encourages women to be "childlike", something else that men apparently find fetching. She suggests making the following comments if your husband has upset you: "Ill never speak to you again" "I won't do anything for you anymore" "I'll tell your mother on you" (I swear I'm not making this up), or if he insults you in public "Wait until I get you home alone" or "I'll get even with you" I can only imagine how my husband would react if I said any of those things to him.

The chapter on sex would be, from a Taken In Hand point of view, downright subversive. She tells us that men generally want sex more than women do, and encourages women to be accommodating of their husband's needs, up to a point. However, she says: YOU need not

feel you owe it to your husband to give sex whenever he expects it, and never refuse. I doubt if there is any merit in this. There may even be harm. Women who do, I have noticed, are not the ones who are idolized by their husbands. They are more often taken for granted, neglected, and sometimes even treated with contempt. In fact, they are about the most poorly treated wives I have known.

No man appreciates sex which can be had so readily. It is simply too cheap. Although you owe your husband a generous amount of sex, he doesn't own your body. To give him sex every time he asks is to spoil him. He will respect us more if we don't give him every little thing his heart desires. That's fighting talk for this site, isn't it?

On the subject of The Oversexed Man she is even more forthright. She suggests that an oversexed man should avoid sexual stimuli, so you shouldn't undress in front of him for instance. You should fill his emotional needs, appreciate him, admire him, and help build his self-esteem. This will reduce his need for sex. Also he should get plenty of hard work and exercise. Vigorous physical exercise diverts interest away from sex. Are you paying attention to this, all you lascivious Taken In Hand men? Get out and take some exercise and get your minds off you-know-what, you lecherous brutes, you.

To sum up the philosophy of this book, admire your husband, praise him, obey him, be a Domestic Goddess, don't work outside the home, be childlike, put your husband first

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at all times, but don't let him have too much sex, it's not good for him, and, above all, Don't Kill Your Own Snakes.

This book is full of glowing testimonials from women who have used the practices advised in this book and have made their marriages happier as a result. Good for them. But, if you are a woman who cannot face the thought of spending your life trying to be both Agnes Wickfield and Dora, not to mention cooing like a pigeon and purring like a cat simultaneously, then possibly the book is not for you. I'd have a nervous breakdown in a week.³⁰²

"LAURA SCHLESSINGER VS HELEN ANDELIN ON HOW TO TREAT YOUR HUSBAND" (18 FEBRUARY 2007)

Having derived enormous enjoyment from *Fascinating Womanhood*, I thought I would try reading *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*, by Laura Schlessinger.

However, I found this book a great disappointment. It is nothing like as funny as *Fascinating Womanhood*. Dr. Schlessinger doesn't suggest that women should try to be both Agnes and Dora, she doesn't recommend cooing like a cat or purring like a pigeon, and there is absolutely no mention of snakes in her book (from *Fascinating Womanhood* I had gained the impression that the USA is a country where the entire populace spend much of their time grappling with snakes).

Dr Laura's basic premise is that men are simple creatures who only want to be respected, admired and

fed in order to be happy. Men are hopelessly vulnerable and putty in the hands of their more complex wives. Her book is full of quotes from people who have rung her radio show, which I gather is very popular in the USA, and from these calls she has compiled a catalogue of brutally oppressed men and cruel, selfish women who walk all over their husbands.

Now, obviously these people are real because they are transcripts of actual telephone calls. Such people do exist. However, I have not personally found that all men are helpless, vulnerable creatures who are entirely at the mercy of their wives. Dr Laura admonishes women not to nag for instance, and not to try and change their husbands, but what if your husband is the one who does the nagging and is constantly criticising you, the wife? She doesn't mention that, yet it's a situation I have come across several times.

She differs from Mrs Andelin in many points. She does not say that women shouldn't work outside the home for instance, and she doesn't suggest that it is necessary for a woman to behave like an imbecile. She does, like Mrs Andelin, recommend that a woman put her husband first in her life, but her advice is on the whole much more rational than Mrs Andelin's. I was a bit disconcerted by the chapter on sex (unlike Mrs Andelin, she believes firmly that a woman should always gratify a man's sexual desires), because she also recommends taking the aggressive role in sex some of the time, she quotes one man who said he liked

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the idea of a woman chasing her man around the house.

I decided that this was beyond me—I am naturally very passive sexually—and although I generally respond to my husband's advances with enthusiasm, I really cannot see myself chasing him around the house. However, I do think it would have been useful if I could have read this chapter when I was much younger and going through a period of not wanting sex with my husband very much. It would have been helpful to me then.

Dr Laura's style is somewhat brutal, but I can see that, in the rather extreme cases of callous behaviour by wives that she quotes, her methods are probably effective. There is one point in the book where she tells a man off for having done something insensitive, which cheered me up somewhat, evidently she doesn't believe that everything is always the woman's fault. Much of her advice is sensible, if somewhat harshly presented.

To sum up, I would say that if you want advice on how to make your husband happier, and don't mind being told that you have the total power to make or break your husband, and that responsibility for making a marriage happy rests entirely with you, this book is quite a useful one. However, for sheer entertainment value I recommend *Fascinating Womanhood*.³⁰³

"FASCINATING WOMANHOOD AND THE IDEAL WOMAN" (19 FEBRUARY 2007)

Who or what is the ideal woman? Until recently I hadn't given that question a lot of thought. That is, until I was introduced to Helen Andelin's book *Fascinating Womanhood* in 2004. From then my life changed as I questioned the prevailing interpretation of gender and reclaimed my identity. No longer was femininity something to hide or repress—it's ok to be a feminine woman.

The message society conveys to girls and women today is that it would be better if women were more like men. Some people would probably find this idea laughable. But in pursuing equality I believe women have lost something special. Take our western cultural opinion of the ideal woman's body as an example. For decades now the desirable woman's shape has been to be ultra thin, broad shouldered and narrow hipped—to be less womanly and more masculine. The pressure on women and girls to conform to this genetically rare body shape has been unfair and has damaged the health of many young women. Likewise our clothing has changed to adapt to a more masculine ideal. Over the decades women have traded feminine apparel for trousers, jeans and suits cut in men's styles and masculine colors. Men though for the most part have not changed to feminine clothing. Comically, in order to appear more business-like and influential many women have also lowered the pitch of their voices to sound more like men. The message of our present culture seems clear—in order to be successful and admired you need to become more like a

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man. But I say what is wrong with being a woman?

Perhaps women have traded too much of their femininity for equality (although we can still have equality without losing femininity). Helen Adelin, author of *Fascinating Womanhood* argues that being a feminine woman is not something to hide but something to be proud of. Despite the criticism leveled against *Fascinating Womanhood* I consider Ms Andelin's ideas to be very liberating.

So who or what is the ideal woman? There should be no strict definition—this would be wrong for we are all different. *Fascinating Womanhood* isn't for everyone. Although I've embraced the principles wholeheartedly I do not agree with every idea taught by Ms Andelin and find some aspects of her teachings dated and out of touch with the realities of life in the 2000s. Nonetheless in the struggle for equal rights I believe we have lost much of our feminine mystique and as a result the world has lost something beautiful.

For women who have dismissed *Fascinating Womanhood* I would encourage to read the book for themselves. Like me you may be suprised to discover a yearning to return to your true feminine self.³⁰⁴

"IS THE IDEA OF FAIRNESS CAUSING TROUBLE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?" (24 FEBRUARY 2007)

One of the problems some couples in a Taken In Hand or DD relationship have, especially when they are new to this kind of relationship, is the idea of fairness. The man often

wants to be a nice guy and doesn't want to spank the woman unless it is "fair". The woman sometimes gets caught up in the idea of fairness too. Much unnecessary conflict ensues. So, my wife and I just took fairness off the table. It took a little while for both of us to get past the fairness reflex, but it was worth it. It really does feel better now.

We simply agreed that job one is helping her and our relationship to be safe and happy. Putting her first means putting fairness or any other abstract consideration second. That sort of clarity makes it so much easier for us to feel like we are on the same side of the table. She can always appeal anything I decide. I listen, I am never arbitrary or unreasonable, but I don't even pretend to be fair. I just sincerely put her first, and she feels safe and loved knowing that.

I know how hard it is, at first, to feel good about exercising authority over your loved one, without considering fairness. Let me share some thoughts on how we came to feel that it's best to lose our attachment to that very powerful word.

First, a Taken In Hand or DD relationship, as we are wired, isn't fair. It's intrinsically asymmetrical. What's fair about me having the final say on almost anything? What's fair about her getting a spanking for not being her best, when all I need to do when I screw up is apologize, promise not to do it again and feel lousy about it? Chris is an unusually bright and capable adult, with an MBA from an elite school and a very powerful position. There really isn't much fair about her needing to

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abide by my judgment as to what is best for her and our relationship. We may not have been thinking in those terms when we entered into it, but we agreed to live by fundamentally unfair covenants which we felt would fulfill us and nurture our relationship. As it happens, we got all we hoped for and more. We really are like honeymooners. We often make people sick.

Second, if we understand that the relationship was never intended to be fair from the start, why should we burden the conduct of the relationship with that consideration, unless it adds greater value than it costs or risks?

Here's an example. Suppose you and your loved one have one of your extremely rare little spats. Some terse and ill-considered words are exchanged which aren't reflective of the love and respect you share and desire to always express. Regardless of who may be more at fault, if you are honest with yourself, you don't ever want to be allowed to talk to him like that, any more than he wants to feel free to act unloving to you. Now, you are trusting him to act on behalf of your relationship. You don't want spats to get out of hand, or happen often enough to erode your tenderness toward each other. Would you want him to put fairness first and say, "I can't very well take the necessary action on our behalf because I share the blame?" Might you prefer that he step in, very early in the spat and say, "That is not how you want to be allowed to talk to me and we need a hug and to start this discussion over with the love and respect we feel." You real-

ize, of course, that that was a warning shot over the bow. It will soon to be followed by some concerted activity a-stern if the warning goes unheeded.

There is nothing fair here. If you end up spanked for something of which he is equally guilty, know that he is keeping his promise to keep the relationship safe. His punishment is having to spank a woman he loves for something that he may be as much at fault as she. I can tell you from experience that the woman will probably feel it's very unfair before she is spanked and will need a lot of tenderness. She will very likely feel loved and safe and glad her man was there for her when her when she needed him to be, after the spanking. Both partners, and the relationship, win; fairness is the loser.

This stuff isn't easy. Will you be able to say thank you for putting me first honey, through your tears, when you both know it's almost never really fair?³⁰⁵

"AGREEMENTS ARE A TWO-WAY STREET" **(27 FEBRUARY 2007)**

A couple enters into a Taken In Hand relationship because we find that it fulfills our emotional needs. We discover a special form of connectedness (and rapture) in this, whether or not it involves spanking.

Now that we have discovered the mutuality of that special chemistry, we need to figure out how to live together, to make our love last, day in and day out, through thick and thin. (My wife and I are in our 30th

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monogamous year together, and I have no doubt that we will go the distance.)

We strive to create norms and agreements, a division of labour and responsibility, based on mutual respect, likes and dislikes, temperament, job demands, and so on. As everyone who has read around on this wonderful website will know, our ways of living together vary greatly. But I would assume that for the great majority of us, male and female, we agree that both partners are responsible for our conduct; we need to be accountable to one another to make a Taken In Hand relationship work.

However those basic understandings are worked out, they form the covenant of daily life. The rules of the road may differ enormously from couple to couple, but (I assume we can agree) they need to be maintained, or revised, from both sides. If the man violates their basic agreement, he acts selfishly or inconsiderately—wrongly.

Many, many times, I find that I owe my wife an apology, and I don't hesitate to give it to her. It's become a point of pride with me to be non-defensive, open to criticism. Her emotional need for my erotic dominance doesn't weaken her capacity to hold me accountable for upholding my side of our agreements in daily life. If it did, I know what would happen—she'd put a lid on her desire for my dominance in order not to forfeit her negotiating power in our relationship and the amour would begin to drain from our relationship.

So call it fairness, accountability, respect, consideration—call it what you will—just make sure she is free to speak up and express her frustration without proscribing the complaints as a way of stifling her feelings or evading the consequences of your actions.* Regardless of the balance of power you consensually establish between you, agreements are a two-way street.³⁰⁶

"A DOMINANT MAN BRAINWASHED INTO SUBMISSION" (18 FEBRUARY 2007)

All through my childhood I was taught to be submissive; "do what you are told", "don't ask why, just do it", "do it because I told you to do it". I was submissive, but I hated being so.

Later, I was submissive to most of the women in my life, and got no fulfillment through my relationships with any of them. Then one day I met a woman whom I just took into my life, in a manner that was totally opposite of the way I was trained. Something inside me just snapped, and I just "took possession" of her. For the duration of my relationship with her, I was the dominant one. For a brief moment in time, I was living a fantasy that until then I kept buried in the deep recesses of my mind. It was the only relationship I had up to that point in my life that was truly fulfilling for me.

It wasn't until much wasted time later that I learned that my entire life

* [NOTE TO THE WRITER: If you give me a name I will attribute your piece accordingly. — Editor.]

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should have been that way. I hated most of my life because I was playing a role that was opposite of my nature.

Finally, I found the strength within myself to shed the very powerful conditioning that kept me from being the man I want to be. In spite some personal tragedies that have occurred during the past couple of years, I am far more content now than then because I now know how I must behave to please myself.³⁰⁷

He does Taken In Hand in subtle ways, the emotional.

I've done the feminist-type way of life, not to the extreme but in the sense of being independent and in control of what I want. Now, I find that the way of life that he wants with a woman in a traditional role seems to make me happy. I don't know why.* Is this what woman are really supposed to be when we cut away the layers of clutter that society has laid down?³⁰⁸

"THE WAYS WE DO THINGS" (11 MARCH 2007)

I totally love a man who is traditional-minded in relationships. He likes a woman to take care of him in the kitchen and to be there for him in the bedroom. He's smart, he's fun, he's responsible. He has the qualities that I find I want at this stage of my life.

I've always been independent, yet, I find that I like all of the ways he has introduced me to and I grow fonder all the time of being in a position to give him the care he wants. It feels as though I have a special purpose that was lacking in my independent world.

He has started to make more decisions in our relationship (over simple matters) and taking more control of decision making. While this may be an uh-oh signal for some, I like this, too. It lifts burdens off my shoulders and I like knowing he is there to handle some of the everyday struggles—battles that are a challenge for me yet second nature to him to easily handle.

"ARE YOUR LABELS PREVENTING YOU FROM SEEING WHAT YOU HAVE?" (14 MARCH 2007)

This isn't about community politics, this is about how sometimes people can try to find themselves and forget what it is exactly that they were looking for.

I've always known I was kinky. And when I say always, I mean from the first sexual fantasy. I've never had a fantasy that wasn't some version of the "rape" or "master/slave" fantasy. I just didn't. And, for the record I was pretty sheltered, and not abused. (Just in case someone wants to pull out the: "oh you poor wilting flower; what have the mean old men done to you?" card. ;))

* [EDITOR'S NOTE TO THE WRITER: If you give me a name I will attribute the above piece accordingly. Secondly, could I persuade you to say more about the subtle ways your man is taking you in hand? I think readers would be interested to hear more detail, should you feel inclined to share it.]

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Like many people who have this deep intrinsic need to be owned, controlled, taken, dominate", fill in the blank with whatever word appeals to you here, I searched on the internet for others like me.

And of course I came upon the BDSM and D/s community because it seemed an obvious fit. But there were all these collars and contracts and safewords and jargon etc. etc. and props and costumes and blah blah blah. It was just a lot of fantasy to prop up a reality that just wasn't there.

24/7 D/s seemed more my speed—because at least it was a way of being, rather than a game. But on some level even *that* was pretend—for me. Not that dominance and submission are games—they most certainly aren't for the people that live them. But that wasn't my "kink" for lack of a better term.

I had and have the "control kink." I wanted to be *really* controlled, owned, blah blah blah. Not just pretend. But within D/s it's understood that in reality the submissive person has all the power and negotiates everything and often there are safewords and contracts, etc. (I'm not saying there is anything wrong with these things, they just aren't what I wanted.)

We started out with a safeword, but it was because I didn't want my husband to feel like an abuser, not because I had some real need or desire for one. Of course he just said: "You are property and property doesn't need a safeword." (Please understand this was *not* abusive to me. This was him really "getting me" more than I thought he did.)

Of course, we weren't playing. From very early on, good behavior/obedience brought reward and bad behavior/disobedience brought punishment. Period. For a long time I worried that I wasn't doing things right, and that I was being abused—not because I actually felt abused, but because empirically, from a textbook definition, I was.

After all, what we were doing was not D/s. I later found a better label—"master/slave"—but even within *that* community there are extremists who want to redefine every word in history. As an example, some cannot be happy with just leaving the definition of slave as: "someone who is owned and fully controlled by another." No, they have to get into all kinds of weird specifics that were never true even in a historical context.

Like people who say that you aren't really owned if you leave. Well if I leave, no, I'm not really owned *anymore*. It doesn't mean I never was.

There is so much competition within the "kink community" to be "more submissive" While I *am* submissive and want to please my husband and master, I'm not always submissive. Someone in this type of relationship doesn't always obey.

Because the need is a need to be controlled.

But what I'm really trying to say here is... I wasted so much time, lobbying for more extremeness in sexual encounters, not because that was what I actually wanted or needed, but because I wanted to make it more "real." And I wanted him to know that he could be as extreme as

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he wanted and it wouldn't freak me out. It took me forever, despite being told and shown over and over that it was true, to really fully internalize that what I have *is* real.

Even though that was what I wanted, and it was what I was getting, rules and games within the kink community helped to obscure for me the reality of what was going on. In some ways it was more of a hindrance than a help. All the labels and jargon and rules and regulations of communities that have nothing to do with my personal relationship, just all stood in the way.

So it was a completely surreal moment when I realized "Hey, my needs have nothing to do with most of their needs." I started keeping a journal because for some reason I didn't think my husband was being consistently dominant. I know ... what the frilly heck does *that* mean? If you are the boss, you are the boss, whether you forcefully exert it every second or not. It was only through journaling and monitoring that I came to understand that:

A. What I had was real. As in he *really is* really the boss of me. We aren't just pretending he is. When we use titles we mean them. He owns me. It really can't get much more simple than that.

And

B. It was *exactly* what I wanted and needed—and everything else that I ever tried to lobby for or *thought* I wanted, was only a way to believe in an ownership that already existed.³⁰⁹

"SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT ABOUT PUNISHMENT SPANKING" (19 MARCH 2007)

I often see posts from people in the DD community saying things like "punishment spankings are feared and dreaded and in no way erotic" and "there is never any sex after a true punishment spanking" and the like. One of the differences between DD and Taken In Hand is that DD people are urged to take care to separate so-called "erotic" spankings from "real punishment spankings". D/s people often advocate withdrawing affection or sex as a form of punishment, another thing that is definitely not advocated in Taken In Hand relationships. And both D/s and DD people often stress the need for the man never to spank in anger.

This might work for some people, but personally I only find spankings erotic if they are for punishment, I do not find purely "erotic" spankings erotic at all. If they are purely for enjoyment then I don't really enjoy them.

I tend to get punished for anything that my husband is annoyed by. The more annoyed he is the more soundly I tend to get spanked, but it isn't generally anything very drastic. Usually it's something like me having let the children do something he's said they're not to, or me forgetting to do something I'm supposed to, or it might be rudeness or sulking or disobedience. And he generally spansks me when he's still angry, otherwise much of the point of the spanking would be lost. If he waited

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until his anger had passed, then there wouldn't be a lot of point in him spanking me, since getting rid of his anger is one of the main reasons for the spanking.

And my husband will certainly have sex with me afterwards if he feels like it—it would never occur to him not to. I tend to be feeling very submissive, and therefore very sexy after I am spanked, and he is usually happy to take advantage of that. When he has sex with me I feel he is asserting his dominance over me, just as he is when he spans me, and I love that. I would hate it if I thought he was deliberately withholding sex from me as some sort of punishment. That would tend to create barriers rather than bring them down.

However, there is no way he would ever sooth my bottom after spanking it, he tends to make me lie on it afterwards, and he also likes to squeeze it and scratch it in order to increase the pain, he doesn't think I should get any pain relief!³¹⁰

"MAN OF STEEL AND VELVET BY AUBREY ANDELIN: A BOOK REVIEW" (22 MARCH 2007)

Because I derived much amusement from reading Helen Andelin's *Fascinating Womanhood*, I decided to give her husband's book, *Man of Steel and Velvet*, a go as well.

Dr Andelin's premise is that in order to be a good husband, father, and a better human being generally, a man should ideally combine both steel and velvet in his character. He

begins by giving some examples of men who combine these qualities, and he starts, rather ambitiously, with Jesus Christ. Lest some men should find emulating Jesus a somewhat daunting prospect, he continues with Abraham Lincoln, Petruchio, and Sir Lancelot.

Mulling over this list, I felt that as being a good leader of a family is the most important thing in Dr Andelin's book, none of these men are entirely satisfactory examples. While I agree that Jesus was a wholly admirable character, he was quite conspicuously uninterested in family life, and remained single as far as we know throughout his time on earth. Abraham Lincoln was a great man and a great President, but his family life left, so I have always understood, something to be desired (I gather that Mary Todd Lincoln was, to put it mildly, a difficult woman to live with). Petruchio—well, I know he has his admirers on this site, but I am not one of them, and I feel that as husband material he leaves a lot to be desired. As for Sir Lancelot, the fact that he spent his life being hopelessly devoted to another man's wife does not perhaps indicate that he was the ideal family man. Nevertheless, these are the men whom Dr Andelin suggests that other men should emulate, and I suppose he knows his business.

The book is divided into two sections, the first describing the 'steel' qualities, and the second (much the shorter part) the 'velvet' qualities.

Not surprisingly, Dr Andelin shares with his wife a belief in rigidly separate roles for men and women. The man's role is to be the guide,

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protector and provider for his wife and family. This, he assures, us, is God's plan for the human family, and any deviation from this is bound to lead to disaster. Women are to be confined to a strictly domestic role and are not to get uppity. Men were created to function as leaders and providers, and women to look after the domestic sphere, and any interference with these divinely appointed roles can only lead to disaster.

Unlike Mrs Andelin, he does not lay the blame for all failures in a marriage with the woman. If a woman gets uppity and starts to act dominant, it is because the man has failed to perform his role adequately.

With a strong man, the dominating woman does not exist. women take over as men allow them to. The responsibility to retain his position is his. This he must do at all costs.

Women and children need keeping in their place, and only trouble can result if they are not. Dr Andelin is unequivocal in his opinion that a woman is entirely dependent on her husband. He writes:

A woman is very much in a subordinate position to her husband. The man leads, the woman follows. He holds the right of decision, the final say in everything. She's dependent on him for all she has, for every freedom, every consideration, for everything she does and every place she goes. He holds the reins in the family.

There is no place in Dr Andelin's world for families that do not operate in this fashion. It's all or nothing

for Dr. Andelin. He stresses that the man should be fair to his wife, in considering her wishes and desires etc, but on the point of the man having all the power he is inflexible.

He stresses the importance of man as protector of fragile, delicate women. In this context he relates a traumatising experience he had when he rented a trailer to do some moving.

When I returned the trailer, his wife was on duty. She was dressed in heavy work clothes, wore shoes which resembled army combat boots and wore a man's cap. At first glance I thought she was a man. As I tried to unhitch the trailer she moved in with a large wrench and said "Here, let me do that." She was competent and she knew what to do. When it was unhitched, I started to push it to the spot it had to go and she said "Let me do that" and she pushed me aside.

I don't know whether her husband placed her in that position, allowed her to do it, or whether she willingly assumed this manly task. But I do know that if he were a real man, he wouldn't allow his wife to present herself to the world in this unfeminine way.

There you are. If you're a real man, never let your wife near a wrench. Dr. Andelin is highly disturbed by the idea of a woman being competent at anything except strictly domestic tasks to which she is suited by virtue of her fragile, delicate, feminine nature. Woe to any woman who steps outside a strictly domestic sphere for she is 'unfeminine' the worst thing any woman can be, at least in Dr. Andelin's book.

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One of the most dangerous threats to a woman's femininity is if she takes a job outside the home, for then she enters the masculine world of work, and she might as well kiss her femininity goodbye for good. she will labour under a natural disadvantage, for she will never be able to match the man's excellence at work. Furthermore, if she is working for another man, she may come to see him as more desirable than her natural master, her husband.

Seeing him at his best and perhaps as a more effective and dynamic leader than her husband, she makes comparisons unfavourable to her husband whose faults and failings she knows only too well.

I give Dr Andelin credit at least for admitting that husbands may have a few faults and failings of their own, though their wives would probably have continued to overlook them if they hadn't been permitted to sneak out of the house and go and work for someone else.

Men have an important role to play as builders of society, achieving things that are of public service to the world. In this passage Dr. Andelin makes a major mistake. Talking about collaborative efforts between men he writes:

No one really knows who came up with the genius. Who, for example, invented the jet engine?

Oh, Dr. Andelin! FRANK WHITTLE invented the jet engine! and my husband can tell you all and more that you wish to know about Mr Whittle, you only have to ask.

Of course, Dr Andelin's point in this passage is that men have made efforts for the benefit of mankind without asking for recognition, but I know for a fact that it took years for Frank Whittle to get recognition for his invention, and I don't think he was exactly happy to do without it.

Women, of course, can be builders of society too, but by staying home and raising children, and not troubling their pretty little heads about science, technology, or anything like that. Stick with the cooking and the sewing and you can't go wrong.

The chapter on masculine traits begins by a description of physical characteristics which I found somewhat startling. Dr Andelin writes:

A man may or may not be born with a large build, a deep-pitched voice and a heavy beard.

I had to mull this one over for a while. I came to the conclusion that Dr Andelin probably didn't actually think that any men were BORN with beards, large builds or deep-pitched voices, but I'm not sure. Does he really think that some boy babies are born with beards? I see from his resume that he has eight children, for all I know maybe some of his sons were born with beards. I couldn't say, but it's an intriguing thought.

When it comes to the 'velvet' part of the book, he tells us that men must build women up and make them feel their role is important, he argues that men are partly responsible for the rise of feminism, through not having shown women enough consideration or made them feel

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useful. Men need to be gentle, tender, affectionate, remember their wives' birthdays etc. He even goes so far as to suggest that men should help out in the house if the women's work gets too much for them, so long as it isn't done as a regular thing.

He lists the things that a woman wants from a man as follows:

1. To be loved and cherished
2. A master to rule over her
3. A voice in matters which concern her
4. Sympathy when she suffers
5. Appreciation
6. A feeling that her domestic work is important work.
7. Personal freedoms. Time to do things. Right to go places.

Dr. Andelin may be right about women wanting some or all of these things, but although he takes the refreshing position of blaming men at least partly for the evils that beset society, feminism etc, he is quite inflexible that there is only ONE model for marriage. The man commands, the woman obeys, the man goes out to work, the woman stays at home. Deviate from that pattern even slightly, and you're finished. Like Mrs Andelin, he is capable of being selective in his quotations and examples in order to bolster his theories. He quotes the same passage from Proverbs about the good wife as his wife does, and like his wife, conveniently leaves out of the quotation the part that shows that the good wife is a businesswoman as well as a housewife.

He mentions as an example of chivalry, Sir Walter Raleigh putting

down his cloak for Queen Elizabeth, without observing that Queen Elizabeth was, in many ways, extremely unfeminine (according to Dr Andelin's definition anyway). she was very highly educated, she had a career (being Queen is a full-time job), she bossed men about, and at times she swore and threw things at people. She was in her own unique way a highly fascinating woman, but not of the kind admired by the Andelins.

Although this book provided a fair amount of entertainment, it disappointed me severely in one respect. Mrs Andelin talks a great deal about snakes and who should kill them in *Fascinating Womanhood* the subject evidently fascinates her. However, there isn't a word in Dr Andelin's book about snakes. Either he just isn't as interested in them as his wife is, or else he just takes it for granted that no man would be rash enough to marry a snake-killing woman in the first place. Oh well, you can't have everything.³¹¹

"RESPONDING TO HIS LOVING CONTROL" (9 APRIL 2007)

I was recently introduced to *Taken In Hand*. A year ago I would have scoffed had anyone told me I'd be feeling as I do now. Any thoughts I'd ever had of being captivated (or captured) by a masterful man were put in the same category as any Cinderella fantasies: the childish results of an overactive imagination.

What I have learned and experienced is so different from what I had

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imagined a male-led relationship would be.

Most of the time, my man is a compelling voice whispering in my ear. He gently strokes me, encourages me, reassures me, and urges me onward. He asks for nothing in return. He is just there, directing, guiding, leading, supporting. Although I always enjoyed at least a modicum of control in previous relationships, I am now delighted to give up that control and respond to his lead. I am grateful for his care and thrilled by his gentle, soft-spoken nature.

I understand and appreciate that there are many women on this site who crave a man who expresses his commanding presence immediately. For me, however, that would have been a disaster. What I needed and received from my man was a gentle touch as he established his authority in our relationship. It is only now, after almost a year, that I can feel that same thrill when he is firm and direct and I feel as if I have no choice in the matter but to respond to him positively. My response to his command hits me on all levels—the thrill is cognitive, emotional, and physical.

I do not know why this man chose me for a taken-in-hand relationship. I was (and still am) sassy and spunky. Obedience was not an option and I had no desire to submit to anyone. It is only through his firm commitment to me and to our relationship that I have been willing to give up my control. His loving leadership won me over. His gentle authority and giving manner opened new doors for me. I am thrilled when he says I am his, and I know that, although

the words are not used in the same way, he is mine, too. I've never felt sexier, smarter, or loved more deeply.

I think it's very interesting that so many different paths can lead to the same happiness. Although my man is bigger and stronger (almost a foot taller and perhaps 75 pounds heavier), it is not his physical power that makes my heart melt. Although he can easily overpower me (and he sometimes does—and yes, it is bliss), it is his tenderness that makes me respond to him. Without that, his commanding presence would only frighten me. But when combined with tenderness, his commands make me turn into putty in his strong and masterful hands.³¹²

"I DON'T WANT TO BE SUBMISSIVE!" (13 APRIL 2007)

I have no wish to just be submissive. To me this seems dull and boring. No fun at all.

I want to be made to submit. I want him to earn my submission. I want him to spank me and control me so that I feel I have no other course of action but to accept his control. I then call him master and mean every syllable of it.

I am not a submissive person in any way shape or form. Never have been and I hope I never will be but I want to feel the urge, no the need, to submit to him. It is the biggest thrill in the world when I know with no uncertainty that he is in charge of me. My every breath is under his control. He is my lord and master, for that moment he is my god. Just

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the thought of it takes my breath away and leaves me starry eyed for this man who has learnt how to tame me and can do so whenever he chooses.³¹³

"WORK - DON'T BE AFRAID OF THAT FOUR LETTER WORD!" (14 APRIL 2007)

How much work goes into any type of relationship? This ultimately depends on the results you are looking for.

Take for example an overgrown garden. In order to get the garden at a manageable state, there will be work involved. There will be weeding, pruning, digging, planting, fertilization, and the list goes on. All of this needs to be done to enjoy the fruits of your labors. Just when you think you can sit back and watch your garden grow, there will be maintenance. An immense amount of TLC is involved if you desire a healthy garden. It takes time and effort, trial and error, sweat and tears!

A taken in hand relationship is not served to you on a silver platter, far from it. Relationships, whether they are Taken in Hand or otherwise are not static. They are living, breathing, elastic, energetic forces. Therefore, once everything is in order, regular maintenance, re-evaluation, open discussions are essential to a healthy Taken in Hand relationship.

The taken in hand relationship is personal for everyone, therefore you and only you can set the ground-work. What works for the goose does not necessarily work for the gander as they say. Play with it,

experiment and make the work turn into fun and enjoyment.

Don't be afraid of that four letter word. The work is where all the fun is hiding. Work means discovery, exchange, liberation, energy, passion, understanding, bonding, learning and so, so much more.³¹⁴

"FORGET FEMININITY!" (15 APRIL 2007)

I have never really understood what "feminine" means, though after reading Mrs Andelin's book I have the impression that "feminine" means "idiot". I'm not sure why a man would prefer a woman to behave like an idiot, but it's something that I feel no woman should have to fake in order to get the attention of a man. In any case, I feel that "feminine" whatever it is, must be compatible with behaving like a rational human being, surely a woman does not have to check her brains in at the door in order to be considered feminine.

It is my personal and deeply held belief that there is nothing a woman can do to attract a man other than be herself. This is based on my own personal experience and that of other women I have known. I am convinced that a man will either like you as you are, or he won't like you at all. Putting on some strange act in order to attract him, whether it's beating on his chest with your fists, stamping your foot, pouting, rationing the amount of sex he can have with you (a very un-taken-in-hand policy, that one, judging by what I've read on here), simply isn't going to work. If you don't naturally feel

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inclined to do these things, it's no good. I don't believe you can teach someone how to be feminine or masculine or anything else. Either you feel a natural inclination to behave in a certain way, or you don't.

And does anyone really want to be with a person who is forever worrying about how feminine or how masculine they are? Isn't it better to just get on with life and let your degree of femininity or masculinity take care of itself?³¹⁵

"TAKEN OUT OF MY ANGUISH" (1 MAY 2007)

My husband and I have been married for ten years. I have been a stay-at-home mom for the past nine years. I feel very blessed to be able to do so. However, lately I have been feeling sort of caged. I really haven't done anything for myself or had any alone time.

My husband has had a few nights lately where he has gone golfing or met a buddy for a beer. Well, last Thursday was one such night. Now I have to tell you, normally I wouldn't have minded a bit. I know he needs his time just like everybody else. And it usually doesn't happen frequently anyway. But this particular day I was an emotional mess. I let it all build up. I started resenting him for doing what I needed to do for myself.

It's not like he keeps me in lock down and doesn't let me do anything. Quite the opposite. He tries to encourage me to do things for myself and he's quite willing to take care of the kids so I can get away.

Still, I just sat there and stewed until he got home. He immediately knew something was wrong and tried to talk to me. I just got angry and went off. He calmly left the room. That of course ticked me off even more. "Sure", I thought, "go into your cave and ignore me some more!"

To make a long story short, as the night went on he made many attempts to try to calm me down. He tried talking to me some more and even tried giving me a backrub which just made me cry uncontrollably! (I told you, I was a mess!) But I couldn't explain to myself why I was acting the way I was, so how could I explain it to him? All rationality had left the building! He finally went to his office and so I sat down on the couch and started watching a chick flick!

About five minutes into my movie, he came into the living room, picked me up, threw me over his shoulder, carried me into the bedroom and threw me down on the bed. He then jumped on me, held me down, and began pleasing me and had his way with me. He was very loving yet firm.

Once we were finished, I felt this sense of calmness just flow over me. I felt so connected to him. He totally knew exactly what I needed. I have to tell you, before we discovered *Taken In Hand*, he never would have done that. We both would have stayed disengaged and gone to bed unhappy. I feel so lucky to have a man who can see, when I can't see for myself, exactly what I need and will take action!³¹⁶

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"EXERCISE AUTHORITY" (8 MAY 2007)

Dynamite's husband spanked her hard and fast for something that did not merit a severe punishment. In her words,

I told him of my thoughts of it feeling a little staged. He felt like this was something that we needed to get past. If he waited for a fight we'd be waiting forever as we get along very well.

Sometimes the relationship itself needs the spanking, either to establish the husband's authority (as in their case) or to defuse other issues that linger between the couple.

That is one of the reasons that fairness should be secondary in a Taken in Hand relationship. The primary concerns should be things like authority, leadership and caring.

By being deliberately unfair, Dynamite's husband was able to establish the authority that she needed and begin to clear the air of uncertainty between them.

That's not to say that fairness is unimportant, just that fairness can and should be set aside now and then.

Don't wait for a fight or argument or serious misbehavior. If she needs to be disciplined, do it. Taken in Hand is not a justice system, it is a relationship.

There does not need to be a balance between specific misbehavior and warranted punishment. Sometimes you just know what needs to be done and you do it, for no reason other than "because I said so".

Some couples use maintenance spankings and these can serve the

purpose. If you don't like the idea of a completely unwarranted spanking, you can punish hard for something small. There are always small things that need correcting.

If you read Dynamite's post, you will see that despite the staged nature of the spanking and the unfair harshness of the punishment, she felt good about it.

Authority does not require perfection, but it does require exercise.³¹⁷

"THE POWER OF THE FEMININE 'PLEASE'" (10 MAY 2007)

Today, a woman I don't know, a woman whom I have never met, a woman on the other side of the world, asked me to do something that requires a couple of hours of work. I have no hope of meeting her, no hope of seeing her face nor having so much as a smile from her.

And yet, I could not resist her request.

She wrote, "Please please please" along with fifteen other words praising me for what I had done—and asking me to do it again. The word "please", along with her feminine writing style, gave me the energy and the desire to do as she asked.

Often, women ask without asking. How many times have we heard a woman say "the lawn needs to be mowed" or "we're running low on bread"? We're supposed to interpret this not only as a request, but as sufficient motivation to do something for her.

The resentment engendered by such statements—requests without

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the simple decency of requesting — can slowly poison a relationship.

"I shouldn't have to ask," is often the retort of a woman whose unrequested request goes unfulfilled, where if she had simply said "please", she could have had anything she wished.

The raw power of a woman saying "please" is enough to make a man travel to the ends of the Earth—or even to the mini-mart at 3am—to retrieve the golden fleece, or gather the eggs of a chicken.

"Please" does not make one a slut. It doesn't need to be accompanied by promises of sexual pleasure. In fact "please" is much more powerful than "I'll make love to you all night long".

"Please" creates a longing to do the thing asked, whereas "I'll make love to you all night long" creates a longing to ... well ... make love all night long. Of course, if that's what you want, you can combine the two: "Please make love to me all night long," will probably produce the desired results (assuming you say it to your husband or lover).

But you don't have to be a wife, a lover, a slut, a whore, or a mistress to say "please". A mother can say it to her son. A daughter can say it to her father. A sister can say it to her brother. A woman can say it to a friend, or a co-worker, or an acquaintance or even a stranger.

And it will affect him—often to the point of granting her request.

It isn't indecent; it isn't demeaning; it isn't degrading. It's just plain powerful. When I hear, or read, a woman saying "please"—with that lilt that comes only from a woman—

I can't help myself. I want to please her. I want to do as she asks.

Even if the word "please" is the only reward I will ever receive.

Of course, "thank you" or "that was fabulous of you" is kinda nice too.

So, if you want something from a man, try saying "please"—in a nice way—in a feminine way. If you want that special something from him, try saying, "please take out the garbage" or "please put me over your lap and spank me."

You might be surprised at the results.³¹⁸

"A HIGH-DOMINANCE WOMAN TAKEN IN HAND" (14 MAY 2007)

While reading the few recent threads posted over the last few weeks, I got to thinking about my power dynamics inside and outside my relationship(s) and my work and social life, both currently and pre-Taken-In-Hand. It has occurred to me that I may, perhaps, be a little hypocritical in regards to my beliefs and actions. This doesn't necessarily present a problem for me, and I've reconciled my feelings and beliefs within myself. I do, however, find it a bit curious.

I deal mostly with men, day to day, in my job. The main part of my job consists of fixing technical problems, repairing electrical and electronic equipment, specifying technical systems for jobs, project management, and lots and lots of talking with architects, engineers, contractors, and other myriad tradesmen. I get a lot of the macho, pat me on the

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head, don't take me seriously, "It'll be okay little darlin'—I'm a man and I can take care of it," or worse, complete and utter disrespect and disdain, because I am a woman. I refuse to put up with this kind of behavior from the boorish, clueless, prejudicial chauvinists. Most other times, I come across the respectful but dominant type who expect to be able to bully me into acquiescence. Even these types, who will be respectful and listen (but ooze an air of dominance), are off-putting to me. I *know* what I am doing, and when it comes to the equipment I am trying to discuss and instruct them about, I absolutely demand their attention and compliance with any requirements, specifically relating to installation and operation of this equipment. If they usurp my authority and decide not to follow my instructions, I can be a real ball buster—a force to be reckoned with. To an extent, I tend to get a kick out of standing my ground and being in control. It's a rush to come out on the other side of a challenge with their respect, grudgingly, or not. In a work or social setting, when I sense weakness, in women or men that I work with, I remain respectful and civil, but I find myself in a constant state of irritation. I would much prefer to deal with the chauvinist, or the dolt, than the indecisive, hesitant, nervous type. I don't do well in the reassurance department, other than when my children are involved.

I work with my significant other. We've been together for most of 11 years, now. He's the boss at work—not only over me, but over our entire (small) company. He's the top dog,

and runs the place. We have an excellent relationship at work. His niche in our industry is a little different from my own. If not for me, he would likely get rid of the sales/service/in-stallation portion of our business. His focus is elsewhere. Our agreement was that he would let me do what I wanted, and grow what I wanted, provided I could at least cover my salary and my costs. In turn, he would leave me virtually autonomous. He does not question me, he does not micromanage, he interferes in *no* way with my little portion of our company, other than to be there with a friendly ear if I need to bounce something off him, or on the rare occasion I don't feel comfortable making a large financial decision, and to keep a very distant eye out and make sure things are well. He is ultimately my boss, but he treats me as an equal. I can't ever recall a time where he has pulled rank. Sounds like the ideal, laidback wonderful boss (and he IS!).

Hehehe—here's the twist. He is the head of our household. It's his way or his way, and I am expected to obey. He is the leader of our home, and there is no equal power or say-so. When I walk in the door (or even when I am away, as I travel a lot), he's a totally different kind of "boss". He's very particular about certain things, and insists that I accept his authority. It's a night and day difference. He does not let me roam free and on an unlimited leash with pretty much unlimited say-so, as he does at work. I'm expected to ask before spending money (that's OK—see below), call with updates when I am out of town for business,

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and just generally keep him in the loop. It sounds like common courtesy, and generally, it is, but the difference is that there are consequences if I forget to—or decide not to—do as I am expected. I'm expected to do other not-so-common things, like go to bed at a certain time, and not wear clothing when in bed with him.

I am so completely *in charge* and *dominant* in my professional life. I am really dominant in general, I suppose—except in our relationship. It literally *changes* me. I just simply respond in a way that is so completely different from the rest of me—from the me that I present, genuinely, I might add, to the rest of the world. My dominance and control out in the world isn't faked or forced, but neither is my acceptance of his control and authority. It simply puts me in a different place...and naturally!

At work, I virtually demand that I am allowed to spend what money I need to in order to perform my job correctly, and I honestly think I would resent it if I had to ask permission. At home, I have a very serious issue with money in general (opposite what you may think—I am a NON-spender). I spent many years with no money and in much financial stress, and I don't like to spend a single dime (actually, that goes for work too). If it were not for him, I would be in a constant state of distress at the mere *thought* of pulling a dollar out of my wallet to pay a bill or purchase something. I can't spend money. I freak out! I am always afraid of not having enough in the event of some strange unforeseen event or emergency. I am always

waiting for the other shoe to drop and for us to run out of money, with some catastrophe ensuing. We, of course, do not run out. All the bills get paid, almost always on time. We have what we need, for the most part. The children get generous gifts (and they deserve them) on birthdays, holidays, and when they've done something extra-special to earn such. I am so very thankful he is able to handle our finances. I could cope, if I had to, but I certainly would not be as happy and relaxed and secure-feeling. It's so much better to be able to simply ask if I can have something I need, and be told yes, or no (it's never a no for anything unless there's a legitimate reason).

I believe I have always had this need to be taken in hand, in a relationship. I haven't always known it, and when I first got an inkling of what I wanted, I was afraid and denied it. I tried to be stronger and more dominant, in the hopes that I could just convince it to go away, or overcome it. I find it curious that I can (virtually) seamlessly slip between these two roles now—and that I've reconciled both as such that I don't resent or fear either one. I enjoy me—and all the opposing parts. Back when I discovered that consenting adults could exchange power, and what the many facets and ramifications of that were, I was very intent on understanding why I was the way I was, and was confused that I could be so completely different professionally, as opposed to personally. Before I discovered this Taken In Hand part of me, I was always in charge, in control—or at least I always endeavored to be. I

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didn't have much patience for people like me who wanted their man to be in control. I thought they were just uninformed, misinformed, or even weak. I mean, and then meant, no offense, it's simply how I felt. Discovering I was, in part, the very thing I had snubbed, was a real eye opener for me (hence my hypocrite comment). I find much amusement in the fact that I often get a bit frustrated with my situation and want to feel more control on a more regular basis.³¹⁹

"SAYING 'NO', LEADERSHIP AND CHOCOLATE" (17 MAY 2007)

If I asked my husband to do something and he said 'no' it would be because he had a reason for not doing it, even if it was something he simply didn't want to do, I can't imagine he would ever say 'no' with the deliberate intention of hurting me, nor can I see how that would benefit our relationship in the least.

If the man doesn't say "no" sometimes, or if he has to state a good reason for saying "no", then who is in charge? The man or the woman to whom he is "answerable"?

How does a leader set limits without saying "no"? Perhaps he precludes the request in advance by telling her that she can't have certain things. But that impedes communication.

If she can't ask for something without it being mandatory that he grant it, then she stops asking for things unless she is sure it is what he wants. In that case, she has taken charge in the relationship. She is

leading, anticipating his needs and making decisions accordingly.

For my wife and me, it's the other way around. She asks. Sometimes I say "no". Sometimes I give a reason, and when I do, sometimes the reason is pretty arbitrary.

Sometimes I just say, "no".

I get to do that, because I am in charge. I get to make the decisions. If she doesn't like it, she tells me. I listen. Sometimes I am swayed by her, but usually not. Usually I have already taken her needs/wants/desires into account. I'm the one who anticipates and makes decisions.

But, even when I say "no", I remember what she asked for. Later on I usually give her something else; something that satisfies her need but not necessarily in the way that she expected.

When I say "no" and she rebels against my "no", I listen—and then I take her in hand. That's part of the price she pays for my leadership.

In fact, if I don't say "no" often enough, if I am not arbitrary often enough, my lack of arbitrariness causes problems. She gets restless, feeling like I'm not expressing my feelings, that she isn't experiencing my strength.

Under those circumstances, she's likely to start asking for things that she knows I will say "no" to, just for the comfort of hearing "no" and feeling protected—the comfort of having limits.

As for deliberately hurting, that's what punishment is. When you punish, you inflict pain—sometimes physical, always emotional.

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Sometimes, saying “no” is the most effective form of punishment – or limit setting.

More often than not, I punish with words or by setting limits. I reserve physical discipline/punishment/correction for times when she is out of control or openly rebellious or when I am expressing feelings that need to be expressed physically.

... or for erotic effect, which is beyond the scope of this particular article.

Spanking, for us, is a way of effecting emotional change or expressing passion, not for the mundane issues of everyday life.

Spanking as a regular/frequent/mundane form of punishment is (for us) a sign of weak leadership. It is too much like “parental” behavior. It is too abusive.

If I can't rein her in on a day-to-day basis with words, force of personality, commanding presence, a stern look, saying “no” ... those kinds of things, then something is wrong.

But, that's the way we do things; that's what works for us. It is driven by her needs for limit setting, feeling strength, protection, romance – and her need to surrender.

She needs to hear “no” – arbitrary, decisive and strong “no” – in the same way that she needs chocolate. She craves it. With it, she feels warm, loved and loving. Without it, she gets crabby.³²⁰

“WHY THE ‘Wow!’?” (17 MAY 2007)

Taken in Hand is not a *lifestyle*. Rather it is the normality for which

man and woman were created to live together in harmony.

The naturally occurring routine explains the “Wow!” when a couple stumbles upon a Taken in Hand relationship. Suddenly, previously incomprehensible parts of a marital jigsaw puzzle seem to magically float into place.

Taken in Hand is about taking a woman in hand for the purpose of conceiving a marriage. During the process, she will suffer the pangs of penetration and birth. Only, in this case, the man breaks the woman's mental hymen and impregnates her with an intimate bonding from which is born a marriage greater than vows and coitus alone can ever hope to duplicate.

She emerges as a new creature – released from the bondage of the dragon that protected her before meeting the knight that would set her free. From the pain of his control of her there emerges peace within, domestic tranquility without, and stability for all to see, admire, and even envy.

The need within the woman for this level stability is so visceral as to defy attempts to explain it. Conversely, efforts to conspicuously avoid being Taken in Hand warp some women to the point that – with due respect accorded to psychotherapist and author John Gray – these vociferous and nefarious creatures appear to come from Pluto rather than Venus.

Continuing to borrow liberally from Gray's less offensive insights, Taken in Hand allows men to *fix-it* and women to experience the *cleansing well*. Women in Taken in

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Hand relationships understand the power of tears in keeping a woman sane at those times when it appears that the gods have indeed conspired against her.

At the same time, being able to take his woman in hand allows men to keep from hibernating in their emotional caves—while leaving the woman to keep up appearances, before finally calling it quits (frequently by filing for divorce) as she gives up on becoming the woman she was intended to become.

When the bright sunshine and floating steps of romance would normally give way to painful disillusionment and coagulate into the haunting emotional midnight of misery—the stage in which most divorces occur—Taken in Hand brings about an awakening to realize the gift and potential within the marriage of two otherwise ordinary people as they become something greater than the mere sum of their individual selves.

The couple nourishes each other as nature intended. They can do what all couples start out doing—living on their love for each other against all odds.³²¹

“WHY IS COMMITMENT IMPORTANT?” (19 MAY 2007)

We hear a lot of talk about how to have great sex, how to turn a woman on, the delights of non-verbal communication and so on, but it all seems to miss the point.

What I find missing is any understanding of a woman's need outside the context of sex. Please don't mis-

take me: I am in no way minimizing the power of good sex. It is hard to imagine how a relationship between a man and woman can flourish without it. My concern is this: sex does not stand on its own.

What makes for really good sex is in knowing the woman. There is more to making a woman hot to trot than a healthy body and “magic hands” (or wiener). If other emotional needs are not met, there will be no levitating her off the mattress.

Perhaps in the short term, when everything is new and exciting, a man gets a glimpse of the pleasure of having a woman. There is nothing wrong with new and exciting. It can be glorious, but what comes later? How does one sustain the kind of relationship that will continue to flourish? One which will insure that ecstatic non-verbal communication does not fade over time.

One cannot simply pay attention to her clitoris and expect any long-lasting fun in bed. Without an abiding commitment to the woman there will no long lasting male/female fulfillment, in or outside the bedroom.

For some men (who remain boys) any talk of commitment scares them silly and shrinks their wieners. But these *boys* never come to know the deep satisfaction of really knowing a woman.

In order to get down to the good stuff in a woman a man must tend to the needs of her heart. Women desire a man who will remain committed, who knows how to handle her, and cannot be led around by his nose. Once a man understands these truths about a woman's desire he

will have all the non-verbal/sexual fun he can handle.³²²

"SLEEPING POSITIONS, RITUALS AND CONTROL" (21 MAY 2007)

Over the past few years—the years in which Elle and I transitioned into a Taken in Hand relationship—we have changed sleeping positions. It didn't happen overnight (pun intended), rather it was an evolutionary process.

We used to sleep on our sides in the "spoon" position. Sometimes we faced one way, sometimes the other. Often, we would switch during the night.

As she became more and more submissive, more comfortable and assured of our new relationship, she began to sleep flat on her stomach. I began to sleep on my back. We would often start out in different positions but eventually end up in the new default position.

One night, after we had acclimated to our new sleeping positions, we were just about to drift off to sleep when Elle asked me, "What's wrong?"

I was mildly annoyed about something—the nature of which escapes me at the moment—but it wasn't that big of a deal, and I hadn't wanted to make an issue of it. I asked her why she thought something was wrong.

She replied, "When you put your arm across my back, I know you aren't mad at me. You never put your arm across me when you're mad."

I hadn't realized it. I'm not sure how it developed, but somehow I had gotten into the habit of putting my arm across her back in a particular way. Just before falling asleep, I would move my arm across her, just above the small of her back, holding her in place, holding her down for a moment and then resting my arm there.

It was probably just my way of giving her a little taste of dominance so she would know that I hadn't forgotten; a kind of reassurance that "I'm in charge here, you're safe."

Regardless of why it started, she had gotten used to it. Somehow, holding her down for a moment—a gesture that a few years before would have been oppressive—had come to signify "whatever I may have said today, I'm not mad about anything."

When she feels that, she can fall asleep knowing that all is well. When I didn't do it, she was restless and couldn't fall asleep.

Her need for me to give her a nightly reminder of dominance—and the fact that she noticed its absence—was one of those clues that she really did want it. She wasn't just doing it because she thought I wanted it or as a fun fantasy every once in a while. It was a deeper need, something that she craved every day.

Since then I have added something to our little ritual. Her wants/needs for my control were being satisfied so I decided take some pleasure for myself.

Now, every night before I put my arm across her back, I rest my hand on her bare bottom as a prelude and

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give it a few pats; nothing painful, just the kind of pat-on-the-bottom feeling that says, "I might just have to spank you," and of course, "I like your bottom".

It is pure pleasure-taking for me, but it is also fun for her. She usually wiggles a little, maybe purrs, maybe giggles, and then I move my arm up to her back as I described earlier.

The first part is for me; a taking of a husband's liberty for my own selfish pleasure. The second is for her, so she can rest assured. The fact that she enjoys both is an indicator of how much our pleasure is wrapped up in pleasing each other.

Of course, if we are in a particular mood, if she opens her legs and wiggles seductively, if she raises her hips inviting an actual swat—or if I'm just feeling randy—our ritual might be interrupted by several hours of passionate lovemaking.

Even the sleeping positions have made it more conducive to having sex. By laying face down, she is making herself available to me at my whim.

Reflecting on everything that has changed between us, I think our nightly ritual and our new sleeping positions are the most symbolic: together, they are a daily reminder of the way things are.³²³

"DON'T BE AN 'IF ONLY' PERSON" (22 MAY 2007)

If you are single and you have a definite and clear idea about what sort of relationship you want in marriage, then I think it advisable to ascertain before marriage whether

the other person is willing to have the kind of relationship you want or not. Lots of people have developed Taken In Hand relationships after marriage, but there are also frustrated people who have found themselves married to partners who are simply not that way inclined.

Marrying someone in the hope that they will develop an interest in Taken In Hand is an extremely dodgy thing to do—particularly if you want a lot of control. That's not something you would want to leave to chance. And if you crave spanking/punishment, marrying someone who has no interest in that could be terribly frustrating. Domestic Discipline sites on the Internet are full of people who go outside their marriages for spanking because they can't get their partners interested in it. Frustration POURS out of people who have found themselves married to partners who do not share their desires, the words "If only..." crop up again and again. "If only he would do this."—"If only he understood."—"If only she'd let me..."

Admittedly, I was an "if only" person myself when I discovered this site, and I was fortunate to find that I could have what I wanted after all. But then I didn't have any clear idea of what I really wanted before I was married. If you are single and looking for a partner, I would strongly advise finding someone who shares your desires before you are married, rather than marrying someone and just hoping that they will turn out to be the right type for this relationship.

Don't be an "if only" person.³²⁴

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"HOW TO FIND OUT IF A MAN WANTS A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP" (26 MAY 2007)

Here are some things to keep in mind if you are a single woman searching for a man who might want a Taken In Hand relationship -

First, looking for men who seem to be natural leaders is definitely a good start. Don't confuse pushiness for strength, however—look for men who people follow because they trust him as a leader, not because he is simply in a position of authority and doesn't let them forget it. Taken in Hand women seem to seek strong men, not just people who like having power... If that's true for you, make sure you know the difference.

Don't think that a lack of pushiness equates to a lack of desire for consensual control in an intimate relationship. Especially in modern Western society, men have to be very careful to avoid being seen as "pushy" for professional reasons as well as romantic ones. As male dominance is so frowned on, a man could very well be Taken in Hand material and simply not realize it.

Old-fashioned chivalry is a good indicator as well. It is becoming somewhat unacceptable to do things like open doors for women... and so a man who does such things anyway is effectively saying "I don't care what society says, I treat ladies like ladies." For those who enjoy that dynamic this kind of chivalry is something to look for.

See if he'll make the first move, while encouraging him. You'll need to strike a balance here if you want

to find out how much of a take-charge kind of guy your prospective partner is. You should err on the side of caution here, however—if you want him to make the first move all the time and don't let him know that you are interested in him, he will very likely take that as a sign of disinterest and move on.

Ask for his advice. A man who is suitable for a Taken in Hand relationship will be happy to help someone they care about work out the tough problems in their life. It's perfectly acceptable to ask a friend or companion for advice, and this will also likely be a turn on for the guy if he really is interested in a Taken in Hand relationship.

Be cheerfully deferential at least once in a while, and see how he reacts to that! If Taken In Hand really is his thing, you should see some kind of positive reaction... although it may take a few tries.

So there you go! That's all the advice I can think of at the moment. Feel free to add more, or ask a question if you're curious about something.³²⁵

"A CHILDHOOD MEMORY" (26 MAY 2007)

As I have read the different articles about Taken In Hand, I have pondered whether this is healthy, and whether would it work for a long time—and suddenly, I remembered something that happened in my parents' relationship some 35 years ago.

My mom is normally very sweet and not a nagging wife, but one day,

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when I was a kid, Mom was carrying on and on and on to the point where I could hardly stand it (I was 10). Dad sat in his chair with a stern look on his face. I kept looking at Dad as he sat up a little straighter, his face looking more stern and was obviously getting very displeased at my mother. She was beyond the point of control and didn't notice in her ranting the effect she was having on him.

Suddenly (and I mean very suddenly!), Dad grabbed her arm as she walked by him still ranting away, and made her stop walking and then he popped her on the bottom a few times. My mouth flew open and so did Mom's! She rubbed her bottom and said, "Why did you do that?!" Suddenly, the room was quiet, the ranting stopped and Dad with a devilish smile said, "That is enough, Carol; stop it." Mom looked at me and I could barely hold in my laughter, Dad then chuckled and the room was finely peaceful. Mom then realized how she had sounded and then, to my surprise, she hugged Dad's neck. The tone and the rest of the day took a 180° after that.

I had completely forgot that little memory until I got on this site. I doubt very seriously that my parents do that kind of thing on a regular basis, but I am sure Mom always remembered that authority from Dad and maybe that is why she has never done that again. ;-)

My parents have just celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary and Dad wrote a poem and stated that his biggest success in life was marrying my mom.

Thanks for listening to my memory....and I believe that having a male-led relationship does last—as I have witnessed from my parents' role model.³²⁶

"NO' MEANS 'TAKE ME'" (27 MAY 2007)

I only enjoy sex if the man forces me into it, so of course I'm going to say "no" and mean "yes"—or, really "take me!" And I wouldn't mean "try harder" because he will be a big, strong man, more than capable of ravishing me without any real effort on his part. If it takes an effort for him to ravish me, then he's not man enough for me.

Ideally, however, that's only going to happen in an established romantic relationship, not a casual encounter. (Been there, did that, not that interesting any more.) So how do we get the point of him knowing that's what I want? Especially with the feminists incessantly screaming that "No Means No!" and society demanding that we must all follow that dogma?

I'll confess, I really hate having to explain that to him. If you have to ask to be ravished, then it really doesn't count. So I would very much prefer that he's got some intuitive smarts, so he understands me without me having to explain it. I also assume that he will be as turned on by forcing me into sex as I will be, so it should not be a problem. (If he's not turned on by the idea of forcing a woman into sex, then he's not the right man for me.)

Of course, some people will invariably reply that you can't expect all

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or most men to realize that's what women want, how risky it would be for them to assume that in this day and age, etc. But then, I'm not assuming that all or most men should be able to intuitively pick up on that. I'm not interested in most men anyway, I'm only interested in a very rare and special man who knows what he wants, and who has enough smarts to intuitively understand what his woman wants, too. (And perhaps many other women too. Ravishment is still on top of the list of favorite female sexual fantasies, according to most polls.)

If I have to explain it to him in 12-point font and fill out a signed and dated "Consent to Ravishment" form, then he's almost certainly not the right man for me.³²⁷

"WHAT A MAN GETS FROM TAKEN IN HAND" (28 MAY 2007)

I've heard this question pop up in several threads in my short time here: "What do men get from a Taken in Hand Relationship?" I'd like to offer my thoughts on this in the form of an annotated list. Hopefully this will help the women understand a bit better. It's also a good reminder for the men why we shouldn't settle for less! Here are some of the things the men get out of a Taken in Hand relationship in addition to the usual perks of a normal relationship:

Desire to protect fulfilled

I want to take care of the people I love. Watching a partner get hurt when I know I could help but they won't let me is a bad experience to

go through. Conversely, protecting your partner from unnecessary suffering is a -really- good feeling.

Trust

A good Taken in Hand relationship feels more solid to me, somehow. Both people are open about what they need. Not only that, but I find that the (few, still) women I've been with who wanted to be taken in hand make it much clearer *how much* they need me. I don't consider myself any more or less jealous than the average man, but in a taken in hand relationship it almost seems foolish to even imagine my girlfriend cheating on me. Fortunately I've never had that experience, but it seems even less likely to happen in a relationship where my partner looks up to me so much. It may also make Taken in Hand women feel better to know that, for me and I would guess other men as well, the Taken in Hand power exchange makes your man feel very responsible to you. While I wouldn't cheat in a standard relationship, even the idea of being unfaithful to the one I've taken in hand repulses me.

An ego boost

Listen carefully, because most guys probably won't admit this one! Especially us proud Taken in Hand type guys, heh. Honestly, it feels good that somebody else trusts you enough to let you make important decisions for them, and counts on you to take care of them.

Peace

A lot of the women around here say that they like emotionally "strong"

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men. What that means certainly differs for everyone, but what being strong means to me is fighting hard for what you believe in. This too can take an almost infinite amount of different forms. In any case, sometimes my days are full of very difficult challenges, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I expect most Taken in Hand men would agree. So when the day is finally through, I just want someone there who I don't feel like I need to fight with to convince of something.

Control

By our nature, Taken in Hand men like having control over their personal lives, just as Taken in Hand women like giving up a piece of that control. By itself this is not sexual or even romantic—some people simply like or dislike having control of certain aspects of their lives.

Understanding

Taken in Hand women seem to be most often drawn to straightforward leader types. They usually also can tell the difference between confidence and arrogance, and the difference between wisdom and weakness. Society as a whole seems blind to such distinctions, and so we are often told to do things that, when it comes down to it, are arrogant or weak, and even more often told to avoid things that society tells us display arrogance or weakness but in fact come from confidence or wisdom. If you recognize the difference between the two, Taken in Hand men will definitely appreciate it!

That Special Something

I think it's good to explore why we have this desire for Taken in Hand relationships... however, it's also important to remember that when you're right in the middle of something that really turns you on, you aren't thinking "I like this situation because it makes me feel more comfortable about blah blah blah", you're thinking "Wow." There's something too primal to explain well in a Taken in Hand relationships that just turns some men on, just like it does for some women.

And last but certainly not least, men also get.³²⁸

"WHAT'S IN A NAME?" (29 MAY 2007)

The names in this article have been changed to protect the innocent, but the story is otherwise true.

Sometimes what a man chooses to call you, or what he chooses to be called, can be a big clue as to whether or not he is that kind of man that can take you in hand.

From the time I was born my mother stated quite clearly, on regular occasions, that she named me Stephanie, and that was the name I was to answer to. She did not approve of nicknames in any way, shape or form. She would say that if she had wanted me to be called Stephy, she would have named me that. She named me Stephanie. That was my name, and that is what everyone called me.

Then I met him at college. We were in the same circle of friends and our friends called him Jon. We knew of each other for about a year before we started dating. Shortly

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after we became a couple, he told me that he wanted me to call him Jonathan. That did not make sense to me because everyone we knew called him Jon. I thought that since I was his girlfriend I should call him Jon also. He explained that it was because I was his girlfriend that he wanted me to call him Jonathan.

Shortly after that strangely dominating conversation, he took me to meet his parents. As we walked in the door of his parents house, him mom called from the next room, "Johnny, is that you?" Holy cow, by now I was feeling really strange about this name thing. His mom called him Johnny, and he expected me to call him Jonathan. So he introduced me to his mom, as his friend, Steph. I bit my lip and went by the name Steph for the day. This was not my usually reaction. As I had been trained by my mother, I usually corrected any shorting of my name right away.

So as the day went on, I called him Jonathan, he called me Steph. I began to wonder what was wrong with me. Believe me his parents noticed that I was the only one in the house addressing their son by the longest most formal form of his name. What they did not know is that every time they said Johnny or Steph something burned deep down inside me. I cannot explain it, other then I was beginning to understand what is meant to be taken in hand.

In the car on the way back to my dorm, I tried to explain the little thing about my name being Stephanie, and me needing to be called by that name. He was unmoved. I knew

that his meeting my mother was going to be interesting.³²⁹

"SAYING 'NO' AS CODE FOR 'I CARE'" (2 JUNE 2007)

Just the other day, on a long and taxing business trip, my husband and I stopped at the gas station to buy refreshments. I was delighted to see that my favorite new fixation, Full Throttle Blue Agave Energy Drink, was in the cooler case. A beautiful shade of unnatural electric blue, loaded with sugar and caffeine — what's not to love?

I blissfully grabbed two cans, then turned around to see my husband staring down at me. "No", he ordered, "put it back".

I pouted, and I do mean pouted because tasty-sweet energy drinks are highly addictive. But he was firm; he had the quaint notion that too much sugar and caffeine might somehow be harmful to my already pleasingly plump backside.

"Please", I begged. I wasn't deliberately trying to make bad soft drink choices; I just really needed the hit.

"No" he growled. He tipped back his cowboy hat and glared down at me. Suddenly I was aware that HE might somehow be harmful to my pleasingly plump backside unless I put it down—which I promptly did, with much alacrity. He replaced aforementioned energy drink with a disgustingly healthful sparkling green tea. I did not care, because I was for some unknown reason completely entranced by his mastery of my baser instincts—and that made

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him very, very attractive to me in a very, very hot way.

He actually growled at me at a service station, and it was so totally erotic I didn't dare tell him. If he had said "let me buy you a new naughty nighty" it could not have been more sensual! I was a little confused for a moment, especially since I am not used to being in such a mood at the gas pump lately.

However, I think I have it all figured out.

It was just the idea that he cared enough to notice what I put into my body, and he cared enough to make a decision I really wasn't in the mood to make. He also was man enough to put his foot down when I really, really needed some help disciplining myself in matters dietetic...

He spends all day long making important decisions for other people, about business, about family, about money. For him to take the time to make decisions for us makes *me* feel I'm just as important as his business is to him!

That really is the crux of the whole matter, for a man to care enough to say no—especially when it is *truly* needed.

All day long, we walk through this world without a soul to care for us, unnoticed by the crowds. What a wonderful change of pace it is, to find someone who cares enough to actually notice when we go astray from our own best interests! And how much more wonderful it is, when a true leader intervenes with "No" to help us find our path again...

...especially when that leader is wearing tight jeans and cowboy boots!³³⁰

"JOURNALING: ANOTHER WAY TO TALK" (3 JUNE 2007)

For me, it is so much easier to write. When I write, I am forced to analyze my words, and I am much more succinct. When I write, I am far more cognizant of what I say, and yes, it is "on record". I am forced to admit to myself what I cannot so readily admit out loud...

I suppose that is the next step, the talking about it. I just have such a difficult time expressing myself orally regarding relationship matters, especially when it is erotic in nature. If only I could say out loud what I am able to write! But this is the step in-between; journaling by posting online. I find that when I post here, I have a deep understanding that it is permanent—what is written in the ether on the internet is forever posted somewhere, and I cannot just "forget it" or back away from it. It is for real, and I try very hard to make sure that I mean what I say. I mean, what if my husband actually found me here and read my writings? I have no doubt that he would tuck them away in his heart, and use them to completely master my sexual nature...

I have the teeniest bit of comfort that maybe my husband won't ever find it and I won't be answerable for my writings. Equally, I am also vexed by the less-teeniest bit of discomfort that perhaps my husband will read every word and take it all

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to heart. He already takes charge enough without knowing all my deepest feelings!

On the other hand, what would happen if he discovered these writings, and were granted the keys to the kingdom, so to speak? Would I be eternally blissful, or eternally sorry for speaking aloud what perhaps is better left unsaid?

Either way, the veil of internet anonymity is rent by the knowledge that if he hacks my computer, I'm toast. Perhaps it is time to clear my cache again, hmmm... I just can't help brattishly enjoying that one little taste of control, that one selfish joy that he doesn't know everything. Yet.

That's the appeal, of course. I cannot take it back when I am in a more "sensible" mood, or when I would like to be more in control of my own eroticism...

It's out there for the taking, and I can't take it back.³³¹

"AS THE HEAD OF OUR HOUSEHOLD I PUT MY WIFE FIRST" (4 JUNE 2007)

When my wonderful fiancée put her trust in me to be the leader of our family, it wasn't done on a whim. I earned her trust and continue to do so on a daily basis. The incredible responsibility of knowing that the buck stops with me, has made me strive to be the best leader, partner, father, and person I can possibly be. By giving me leadership, she gets more consideration and attention than any other woman has ever had from me.

My darling Lisa is not a slave or a servant. Her needs and opinions are always part of any decision I make. If anything, I am the servant, as any good leader always is! Our relationship is my master, and I serve it willingly and to the best of my ability. How else could I accept the authority of head of our household?

We are not religious, so I do not regard my position as head of the household as being god-given. My leadership could be rejected at any time. My treasured wife-to-be is not weak, and has run her own household for many years. I have leadership for no other reason than through merit, and because my wife prefers it, and as I have said, I must earn my position over and over again by putting her and the children's needs above my own and making the best decisions possible.³³²

"CORRECTING POSSIBLE MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT TAKEN IN HAND" (4 JUNE 2007)

Women shouldn't HAVE to do what their husband says... I choose to because it is a way I can show my love for him. He asks very little of me so when he does I am only too pleased to do it for him.

No woman should be expected to hide her opinions or disagree. We discuss all things and normally it is my opinion that wins out as he is so laidback. Women helps me curb my frustration and anger as I struggle sometimes to get my point across verbally. Without Women I would probably end up frustrated and

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shouting. With Women neither one of us shouts at the other and we communicate calmly. I can honestly say my husband is never nasty to me. He would see it as a failure in his duty as a husband if he was.

My husband does his fair share of the household jobs as we both work. He cooks the tea generally because he is better at this than I am. I do the tidying because I notice these things more than he does. I have no idea who spends how many hours doing what. We don't count. The jobs get done fairly by mutual agreement.

My husband sometimes asks me to wash his back in the shower. I do this and love it. It is a very intimate close thing for us. He makes me a milky drink every night to help me sleep. We don't do these things because we have to, we do them because we want to and they bring us closer together.

If my husband were not behaving like a responsible adult I would get myself a real man. Luckily my husband takes his role of husband seriously and loves the responsibilities that that entails. He considers one of those to be putting my welfare before his own.

My husband and I work as a unit. He does things that make me happy and I do things that make him happy. Prior to being Taken in Hand he did what he wanted and I did what I wanted. That is not a unit, that is two people living in the same house. We now do what is good for the whole. Who decides what is good for the whole? We do. By talking to each other and saying what would make us happy.

If I felt that the only way to save my marriage was to surrender to my husband's every wish or that it was expected of me to surrender then I would not want to be married to this man. I am not in this relationship with him because I am weak, and if anyone reading this is unclear as to this point then have a read of some of my previous posts.

So why do I prefer to be taken in hand? Well to me marriage is not a war zone where decisions should be fought over and won or lost by the person who shouts loudest, or a debating chamber where points are scored over the other one. So often one hears couples arguing and shouting at each other with neither one listening to each other's point of view. Or they pick, in a jokey way of course, and try to score points (my husband and I call this ping pong). I know of many happy marriages that are punctuated by screaming arguments and apparently they love it and have fab make-up sex afterwards. This suits some couples and they thrive on the challenge. OK, each to their own. That is not for me. I find arguments like this to be destructive and damaging. We don't argue. He does not raise his voice to me, because that is his nature. I do not raise my voice to him because we have agreed this is not an acceptable way for a grown adult woman to behave.

No woman should never enter into a male-controlled marriage just because her husband has given an ultimatum of do as you are told or it's over. If any man said that I would recommend she run for the hills. And it definitely would NOT be a

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Taken In Hand marriage, because a defining characteristic of a Taken In Hand relationship is that it is wholeheartedly consensual.

I am an educated woman with a good brain and I choose to use that education and brain to strive for the type of relationship that works for me. One where I have no choices or have to do everything for my husband would not be a marriage that could make me happy. So I'm glad mine is not like that. Being in a Taken in Hand marriage allows me to work hard, communicate and considering my husband's feelings, decisions and thoughts, as he does mine.

As for sex—some say that men have a higher sex drive than women. Before we became Taken In Hand I would have agreed with that but now it's the other way round. I have agreed that I will not say no to sex. Most of the time I am feeling in the mood for it anyway but if I was not he would not just pester me until I wanted to scream NO NO NO at him. If I don't want to have sex we have agreed that I have to justify why I don't want to. By doing that it can open up hidden areas. For example I may be angry at him but not really know it. By having to say why I'm not in the mood this gets aired and the problem solved. I suppose we could just go back to me saying NO if I wasn't in the mood but where would that leave us? We would both spend the evening emotionally separated from each other. Him sexually frustrated, me frustrated at him for being demanding of me when I'm not in the mood. I suppose he could go and look and

porn and I could go to the gym but we would rather work it out between us.

Technically, with our arrangement, he does have the right to just do it whether I wanted him to not. Him knowing he can take me whenever he chooses means that he needs to pay more attention to my mood and feelings. He finds out how my day had been, etc. If he judges me to be receptive he often just throws me on the bed and off we go. It's great. He could just climb aboard I suppose and treat me as one would a blow-up doll but that would have no interest for him so he does not do that. If he did he would not be someone I would want to be married to.

I could choose to have a marriage where the mental ping pong goes on day after day but that would just build walls between us. I could have a marriage where he does what he wants and I do what I want but that would not bring us closer.

Being taken in hand allows me to be softer and more loving to my husband. It allows me to safely open up and be loved and to be able to love with all that I have. I have no need to keep bits of me locked away for fear that he may hurt me. It is his role to keep me safe, to protect me. Yes I am quite capable of keeping myself safe but to do that means putting up walls and barriers. With him I want no walls just openness, trust and love.³³³

"SAYING SO" (6 JUNE 2007)

I have moved slowly within my relationship and thankfully I am with

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a man who understands and can be patient with me. I've enjoyed the interplay we have when he displays his take-charge nature and I resist. Yet recently, I began to wonder, why am I resisting what I seem to enjoy and want?

So I told him that I believe I no longer want to resist. That it would be a challenge because I am independent. Yet it feels I am ready for this challenge.

As always, he patiently listened and discussed with me. I so love this man.

He said to me, "You know it is what you want" and I heard myself quietly answer "yes". He said to "give it up" (the resistance) and accept this and how special what we have is.

He answered my concern that giving up some of my independence could make me a little dependant with a simple "so what?"

To him, this is all as natural as riding a horse.

I can't begin to explain how this makes me feel inside, how admitting that I want to stop resisting leaves me feeling breathless yet also calm. It is a new direction and I don't know what the journey will really hold. Yet oddly, it feels right.³³⁴

"HAVING CONSENT TO TAKE HER WHENEVER YOU WANT ASSUMES THAT YOU WILL ACT WISELY" (13 JUNE 2007)

Let me first dispense with the obvious. Women who have not given men consent to have sex with them should not be forced to have sex. That would be rape. It is a vile act

and men who rape should be jailed or worse.

But there is a more subtle issue to consider. Some women on this site have said that they have given their husband consent to take them whenever he wishes. They relish the idea of consensual non-consent—they want to give their man the authority to disregard their stated wishes, and instead wish to allow him to proceed with the sex act if he chooses, or even to call the act rape itself!

But even when implicit consent has been given, a man should not always satisfy his sexual desires, even if the ongoing marital agreement allows him to do so.

Everyone may recognize that a boss in a business has the right to make decisions and have the employees abide by those decisions even if they disagree. But it is also reasonable for employees to expect the boss to take into account their interests, even if they must abide by the boss's decisions regardless. This assumes that the boss is generally reasonable and that his decisions do not harm his employees.

If a husband is blessed with a Taken in Hand wife who has given him consent to take her whenever he feels like it, that does not mean that he will take her without any consideration of his wife. The husband in a Taken In Hand relationship is expected to put his wife and their relationship first, rather than acting as a self-serving narcissist. If his wife is currently psychologically or physically disturbed such that being taken would not make her feel good, better, or improve her outlook in some

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way, the husband has no business taking advantage of his authority and forcing himself on her. A loving and protective man, given the gift of control and leadership in his relationship, must not only do what his authority allows, but also what is *right*.

As Bailey put it:

[G]iving someone the power to do things "whenever he [wants"]? comes with an expectation that it will be used wisely. We wouldn't be with these people or in the dynamics that we have if that were not the case.*

The husband in a Taken In Hand relationship is sensitive to his wife's needs. He would not take or take in hand his wife if she were at that time in a claustrophobic panic, very sick, or genuinely terrified. He exercises good judgement.

As Bailey put it:

Just because some of us are in relationships where our partners *can* take us whenever they want doesn't necessarily mean that they do. I've never once had him try to do anything sexual with me while I was sick, or on my period, and although I would have absolutely no qualms about complying, I think one of the reasons I am so satisfied in my relationship has to do with the fact that he exercises good judgement with his control. Actually I think this applies to all areas of the relationship.

Furthermore, because the husband in a Taken In Hand relationship is sensitive to his wife's needs and protects her wellbeing, his wife feels no need to hold on to control to protect herself.

As Bailey put it:

I don't have to hold on to much control because I know that he is not a selfish bastard who is going to make me walk out in traffic, or do anything else harmful to our family.

So to the men reading this: if you want your wife to give you more control, or you want her to give you consent to take her whenever you wish, ask yourself if there is anything you are doing or failing to do that might be causing your wife to feel unable to make herself vulnerable in that way? Does she feel safe with you? Do you have self-control? Do you put her and your relationship first? Are you sensitive to her feelings? If you are not sure, ask her what you could do differently to make her feel more inclined to give you the control you seek.³³⁵

"WHEN THE HEART FINALLY COMES HOME" (19 JUNE 2007)

A few weeks ago I found this site by accident (or destiny). At the time, I had a quick look, decided it wasn't for me, and moved on. For some reason, I found myself back here, not once, but over and over. As if all paths led here. I began to read and take notice. Then, the most incredible thing happened. I quietly realised that I had discovered a safe place. And, it wasn't this website. It

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20150102213752/http://www.takeninhand.com/forum/can.you.take.her.whenever.you.want#comment-15589>>

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was within the loving arms of my husband.

How strange that looks in writing. I've loved my husband for a long time. This year we'll celebrate 17 years of marriage. But almost every year has been an incredible struggle. A power play. Allow me to explain.

I grew up in a family that was out of control. My father was into his fourth marriage. His third ended in suicide. His daughter from that union was my step sister. My father was into black magic and could be incredibly violent at times. I don't remember loving him. He left when I was about 11. My mother was addicted to prescription drugs. She wove fantasy stories into every aspect of our lives. I would have died for her. My brothers were both physically disabled. I suspect her addiction helped that happen. She actually blamed me. Apparently I weighed too much at birth and made her later pregnancies arrive too soon. She told me that as a young teen.

At the age of 14, my mother forged my birth certificate to make me look older, then pulled me out of school (which I loved, I was an A student and lined up for a scholarship) and sent me to work to support the family. We moved constantly, living in a shelter for a while. She smoked and made me get doctor after doctor to prescribe her morphine.

Somehow, I found the courage to move to another country for a while. I totally stuffed up. I had no skills, no education, and more importantly, no self esteem. But I was proud and independent and would never let another person get the better of me.

Fast forward a few years. I met my husband. "I". He fell madly in love with me straight away. I loved him. Not madly. But somewhere inside I knew that out of all the men I'd known, this man somehow was my future.

We married. Had two beautiful children. Went through every rocky moment possible. I thought he was controlling and didn't understand me. I also thought he worked too hard and put too much of himself into making a career. Because I was mortally afraid of losing him, I was certain that every woman he spoke to was after him. Part of that came back to my father, who indeed did have multiple affairs.

Over the years, we had fights so destructive, so hurtful, that he would leave for a few days. At the time, I blamed him. Looking back, I know that my own defences probably made a normal dispute become a war. To allow this man in, to let him see me as needing him in control, was too much to ask.

So, where am I now? After learning a lot about him, about his genuine desire and need to protect me (even when I didn't see it that way), and realising that he worked so damned hard to make sure his family was properly looked after (something my own parents didn't do), I started looking at me. Why was I so hard on him? Why was I so determined to be in control?

That's where taken in hand came in. One thing I've always loved is being spanked. He was the first man to spank me, although hesitantly at first. It became a part of our erotic lives for a while on and off. A couple

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of times, when I really stuffed up, he definitely took his annoyance out on my bottom! I remember those times, and that I never made those mistakes again. But, my perpetual need for independence has made him more cautious over the last couple of years. And I didn't look for that kind of attention.

We work together, as he owns a very successful small business. Lately, we've joked about the various places at work he could spank me. That got me thinking about a lot of things. Not just erotic, but attitude adjustment.

After spending a lot of time at this site, I started acting as if he was head of the household. I know he likes to be in control and so it was easy to take a step back and let him see me do so. He liked it. I wrote him a letter about my inner thoughts. That I realised how defensive I've been for so long. That I finally "got it" about his care and concerns. That I am so very sorry for not understanding earlier. And that I hope he will no longer let me get away with anything, just because I protest.

He told me it wasn't anything he didn't already know!!!! Now, I feel in a bit of a limbo. I long to ask him to really take over the reins. Not to micro-manage me—for I have a position of authority and responsibility in the business that he trusts me to do well. But in our day to day life. I mentioned my need to be spanked more. In the first week, he spanked me erotically every night. Very nice indeed, but I so wanted a little more! He says he is afraid of hurting me. I

tell him that spanking is meant to hurt! But that he isn't harming me.

Last night we were cuddling. I took his right hand in mine and said that this hand I love. It gives me pleasure, and gives me ... and he finished the sentence with "pain". And a tap on the bottom. I asked him if that hand is really for me, even if it is for pain. He said yes.

I know this has been a long post. I am so sorry... but for me, it is cathartic. For the first time in my life, I am in love. I am content, and happy at the deepest level. Two moments of stress that could have turned into fights were quickly calmed simply because we are both calmer.

I know it is early days. I'd love some advice on how to broach subjects with him about more discipline and taking on more control again, seeing as how I've fought tooth and nail for every thing I thought I'd gained.

He is a good man. He loves me and keeps reassuring me of that. I don't want to scare him off at this point.

Any suggestions?

Thankyou to anyone game enough to have read the whole post!³³⁶

"OBEDIENCE - A CURIOUS AND PERVERSE PLEASURE" (22 JUNE 2007)

It is one thing to obey the laws of the land, but it is quite another to choose to obey someone when you need not. You have to obey the laws of the land whether you like it or not: you have no choice in the matter. A woman who enters into a Taken In Hand relationship does so of

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her own accord, often indeed (in my own case and others I've read here) at her own suggestion. This seems to me extremely perverse, even though I have done it myself. Why choose to obey someone when you need not? It is a curious choice.

Still more curious, from my point of view, is the fact that I positively enjoy having my husband tell me what to do, even when it is apparently to my own disadvantage. For instance, there was an incident recently at a French motorway service, when he forbade me to go in the shop. Even though I wanted to go in the shop, and was slightly sulky at being told I couldn't, I got a distinct thrill from obeying him in this instance. It would not have been at all the same thing if there had been a sign over the door saying "No wives allowed in the shop" (though my husband would probably say that would be a good idea). I would not have got any pleasure at all out of refraining from going in the shop in that case.

So for me, at any rate, there is a vast difference between obeying the law simply because it IS the law, and you want to avoid trouble, and obeying my husband when there is no legal obligation upon me to do so. It is a curious and perverse pleasure.³³⁷

"A YEAR OF NEW MANAGEMENT" (25 JUNE 2007)

It is now over a year since our household had a change of management. Initially we rushed impatiently into changes, which we then

had to modify. We started with so many rules, many instigated by me, but then gradually my husband took control of the things that genuinely mattered to him. I am by nature very impatient and I wanted to feel his control in every area immediately. This may be one reason why he makes a better head of our household than I do!

At the start I obsessed a bit about him spanking me. I wanted that to be a part of our Taken In Hand relationship, and I felt that he wasn't doing it enough. I did a certain amount of bratting and sulking, I think. As my husband gradually gained in confidence in what he was doing, he started controlling things in his way. He does spank me when he thinks it's appropriate or he controls me in other ways but I've gone past feeling that spanking is of central importance. Accepting that it is not my choice has made me much more relaxed and is helping me to become less controlling.

The other thing about spanking is that, as a grown woman, I feel vaguely ridiculous in the position of a spankee! Feeling ridiculous though, I have found, is a really good way to take the heat out of a situation; it is hard to continue arguing in that position for one thing. For my husband it is important for him to see that I want to be controlled by him and I think for both of us it plants the idea of making love rather than bickering. Being spanked also has a calming effect on me and I find it very reassuring because I know that my husband is absolutely focused on me. It's not as if I thought he would go off with someone else,

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but it seems to me that a man who is able to express his annoyance is far less likely to end up in a bar complaining that his wife doesn't understand him! By the time he has spanked me, yep, I understand him!

I can appreciate why some people would be appalled that I would let my husband spank me or that I would want my husband to be the head of our household. After a year of being Taken in Hand I know that, for us, this is much better than the power struggle that we had before.

I always knew I didn't really want to be in charge but I come from a family of women who demand equality and on the face of it Taken In Hand may seem like the antithesis of equality. In reality I know that I am the centre of my husband's world now, and he feels empowered to make decisions which he feels will benefit us as a unit. He makes the final decisions but I'm his inspiration and his muse! I'm proud that I am strong enough as a person to go against the trend and be true to who I am, not who society currently expects me to be. Fashions pass and couples need to find their own ways of being together.

Listening to my husband much more has revealed something to me. He has an annoying tendency to nearly always be right! He's always said to me that he's always right but I never really believed him. I am a very emotional person and, especially when I have PMT, do make emotionally-led decisions. My husband, however, is much more balanced and life is much smoother since he took charge.

I wondered at the outset if we would sustain our Taken in Hand relationship. It has changed over the year and continues to do so. I continue to find it very erotic to obey my husband and support him in his decisions. I don't think it is his God-given right to be in charge but I think he has proved his suitability for this role in our household.

I don't think we were facing imminent divorce when we started this but I do think that we are more happily married than we were a year ago.³³⁸

"SOFTLY TAKEN IN HAND" (27 JUNE 2007)

He is a very sensitive man, and by that, I mean that he is keenly aware and in tune of his surroundings, of human nature, and of me. From our first meetings, when I was leery and suspicious of meeting men, he was relaxed and confident, and in tune with my hesitant nature. Even kidding around, he talked respectfully and kindly to me. Always a gentleman. Carefully and slowly, he was instrumental in building an "atmosphere" that I could warm up to, and I did.

He reads body posture and expressions. One time, early on, we were sitting on a blanket outdoors, he grabbed me playfully and pulled me down, quickly noting my stiff posture and quickly reassuring me to "relax". Everything's ok.

When I say I need to talk, he will pull up a chair and focus. Listen. He wants to know what's on my mind. He will also take the lead on conver-

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sations, gently explaining to me and then telling me we will end the conversation now unless I have anything further to say.

If I tell him I feel shy about something, he may tell me to come to him. Now. And then in his way of speaking, inform me that he loves me. No matter what.

Early on, he used to say I was always safe when he was around. I used to laugh at that, feeling I could take care of myself. But as time has gone on and he has periodically said to me things like if anyone ever tried to hurt me, he would take care of them, I have come to appreciate the protective instinct he has.

He cares in many little ways, such as he will point out why my high heels are not always a sensible choice. And yes, he is right. Or one day he noticed I was nervous while driving on a road and he reached over without saying a word and gently caressed my hand.

He is a take-charge man. And he will say so. As our relationship has evolved, he tends to instruct me at times. Expecting me to comply. Pointing out when I don't. When I told him I am a leader type, he told me to be that at work, not with him. He has picked me up over his shoulder to move me from point a to point b when I am resistant. And I do shriek over that! We are so cliché!

And I love this man dearly!³³⁹

**"A MYSTERIOUS COMPULSION TO OBEY"
(2 JULY 2007)**

If I don't do what my husband tells me, I will get spanked. Now I don't find this an unpleasant prospect at all, so why it should make me more obedient I don't really know, I only know that it does.

And although I do feel that his authority is real, in the sense that I feel a compulsion to obey him even though I know I don't really have to, it can't feel the same as it does to a woman who lives in a society where women are compelled by law and by society to obey their husbands, or else.

Of course, the threat of unpleasant consequences is not the only thing that makes people respect authority. Most employees do what their boss wants because they want to get on in their job, not because they're afraid of getting sacked. I get my children to school because I know they need to get an education, not because I know I could end up in the nick if I don't.

I don't obey my husband because he will spank me if I don't, but because I feel that mysterious compulsion to obey him when he speaks to me in a certain tone of voice. It is real, and yet it is pleasurable, which is not the case with all forms of obedience. I don't resent his authority the way I might do if it was thrust upon me whether I liked it or not.³⁴⁰

**"DD RELATIONSHIPS - THE VIEW OF A
MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL" (22 JULY
2007)**

I am a mental health professional who has worked in the field for ten

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years, specializing in trauma related to abuse and maltreatment.

I have stopped contributing to forums because I got tired of feeling like those who wanted to save people from themselves were getting too much air time, which left me feeling an uneasy combination of boredom, frustration, and defensiveness (three things I like to limit as much as possible in my life).

I rarely try to explain Joe's and my relationship to one another, even to our own friends. What they see is a ridiculously passionate couple (after a few years together, that has not quelled) who are very happy—and I do get questions about that... what keeps us so enthralled with each other, etc. But, can I say that DD is what creates the magic?

No, it's really only a part of things, and I think that what really makes us a strong, committed and loving couple is that we share a common vision of what life is about for us as individuals and as a couple. For one thing, we both are committed to our social values, to making a contribution to the lives of others, to nature and exploration, and to spending our time in a balanced way that includes working separately and together, enjoying each other and our friends, and making sure we set aside time for rest, pleasure and *fun*.

We represent many things to each other on many different levels, so we do not feel stuck like an old record in being only one way all the time. Sometimes, we both go full-on into working-bee mode, when we hardly know that the other exists for hours and days; but, we make sure we touch base with each other and give

an affectionate peck and caress as we can. Other times, we shut down everything and take off to the mountains for a few days of fully-engrossed talking and love-making. Then, there are quiet winter weekends, such as now, where we cuddle up inside the house, flounce on each other and read for hours on end or watch old movies.

DD is an undercurrent in our relationship that sometimes comes fully to the surface, but as we get closer and closer, we have found that we live in an intimate harmony that rarely requires the use of real corporal punishment. That doesn't mean we have cut back on use of hands, paddles and straps, though! ;-)

I can really only speak about how it works for us, as I am pretty out of the loop with other couples' private lives other than those whom I see in my therapy practice, whom I do not discuss. I do know some friends of ours tried DD on for size, and both felt that it did not suit them as individuals or as a couple. I am not interested in recruiting people to our lifestyle. The woman in this couple thinks that Joe and I are "the perfect couple," and they decided to try DD themselves. When it didn't feel good for them, I said, "So why do it?" They didn't persist.

My "subjugation" has not ramped up over time, as some might think it would. Joe does not increase his demands on me. We found a level of control/autonomy that works for us, and we hover around that level, rarely varying much from it in either direction. However, it is true that in a bad relationship the demands

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could keep mounting until a woman's full subjugation was achieved. I see this happen in marriages that have no DD framework, and I consider it abusive.

I work with one strong and true principle, which is to trust people to consider for themselves what they most want and need, and to help them figure out how to achieve that. I think that, if I am going to argue that self-actualization is an important goal (and I believe it is), then I need not to act as the "expert" who knows what "normal" looks like, and who tells others that they need to raise their game to live up to my idea of normalcy and good mental hygiene. That's another type of social control.

As a clinician, I ask myself a few guiding questions: Is this person living the life they want to be living? Are they living according to their own principles? How high is their level of functioning (a low level of functioning is definitely a sign of a struggle with mental or physical health)? Is anyone else being physically or mentally injured by this person or family system?

If a woman is not displaying clinically significant symptoms, and is not seeking a mental health professional's help for her life, I do not feel that I have a right to tell her what's good for her. It is her right to explore and find that out for herself, in my opinion, as long as she is causing no direct harm to others.

For some couples, undoubtedly DD is a way for the woman to submerge her individuality and fuse into the man in a very enmeshed way that is not very healthy. Can it

have addictive properties? Sure. How many couples are using it this way, I have no idea. However, most of the people I remember from DD lists are couples in which the female partner is working and has her own life going on. I think it's hard to isolate a woman like that, because she will have her own work, her own friends, and her own sense of self as an individual, and as a member of a couple, but not as solely an appendage of a man.

Where you are dealing with a woman who has an abuse history, a poorly developed sense of self, low confidence, an inability to negotiate boundaries between herself and others, and an external locus of control, yes, you are asking for trouble ... however, maybe she needs to go down that road before she can figure out that it isn't the path to healing she thought it could be (at the end of the day, there is not really such a thing as the relationship that saves us from ourselves).³⁴¹

"NOTICING AND NOTING THE POSITIVE" **(30 JULY 2007)**

For a while we have had a thing [where] I wrote something in hubby's diary if I was feeling disconnected etc. Then someone gave me the idea that this kind of journaling could be used to note positive things as well. For example, last night he quietly told me off for poking him in the ribs and told me that I was never to do again.

It was no big drama and no punishment was had but to me it was a real step forward.

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Previously this step forward would have been forgotten, but by me putting it in his diary, saying what a positive thing it was, it is there as a reminder to both of us of one of the many times he has got it right.

I think this could be a good way forward for us. Does anyone else do anything similar to this? I know that lots of people do journalling but I'm thinking more of the idea of jotting down the little things that let your husband/wife know when an action has had a positive effect.³⁴²

"THE COMMITTED MARRIAGE" (17 AUGUST 2007)

I love *The Committed Marriage*, by Rebbetzin Esther Jungreis! Rebbetzin Jungreis's teachings regarding how to find and maintain a loving, harmonious relationship are based on Jewish biblical wisdom, but I think that anyone could benefit by reading this book.

The book is almost like a handbook for building a better marriage and it has helped mine immensely. I have recommended it to friends and am currently reading it for the third time.

Within the pages are stories about couples in distress; we read about various situations and how they were resolved using the wisdom of the Torah and Biblical sages.

Rebbetzin Jungreis also relates stories of her long and wonderful marriage to Rebbe Jungreis, offering us insights into how to be a more considerate, loving, kind partner to our spouse. I highly recommend this

book to anyone wanting to better their relationship.³⁴³

"HOW DO I BROACH THE SUBJECT OF TAKEN IN HAND WITH MY SPOUSE?" (18 AUGUST 2007)

How do I broach the subject of Taken In Hand with my spouse?

One way to broach the subject is to show your husband or wife the Taken In Hand site. However, that can scare some spouses, so you might want to broach the subject a bit less directly in the first instance.

How to broach the subject depends very much on you as individuals and on your particular relationship. What might be appropriate for one person might not be at all appropriate for another. But here are a few ideas:

If you are a wife wanting to broach the subject of Taken In Hand with your husband

When your husband takes charge in any way, take the opportunity to bring up the subject, saying something appreciative about it and asking if your husband would enjoy being in charge more in your relationship.

Or perhaps you could tease your husband affectionately about him being bossy, and swoon, saying you love his bossiness.

Or you could use the opportunity to mention something you have read that said that marriages in which husbands are in charge are hotter and more harmonious, and ask him what he thinks.

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Or, if any item in the news or any TV programme or blog post brings Taken In Hand to your mind (such as news about modern marriages increasingly ending in divorce, or the lack of sexual passion in egalitarian marriages) use that opportunity to talk to your spouse about what makes a marriage both stable and exciting.

Or if there is something about you that annoys your husband, that you think you can change, talking about that would be a natural way to broach the subject of Taken In Hand.

If you see a woman speaking disrespectfully to her husband, whether in real life or on TV, you could mention that you really dislike seeing men disrespected, and that if you were ever to do that you would *not expect your husband to put up with it*.

Remember: the best way to broach the subject is to think about your particular husband, and how Taken In Hand might be of interest to him as an individual, and broach the subject with that in mind, making it relevant to your particular husband. On no account make it sound like something unpleasant and burdensome you are hoping he will suffer. That would be all wrong. Ensure that what you say to your husband will make it very clear what's in it for him. If you make it sound like a tedious burden for him why would he ever want it?! Taken In Hand is supposed to be interesting, fun and exciting.

If you are a husband wanting to broach the subject of Taken In Hand with your wife

If your wife is a typical Taken In Hand inclined woman, i.e., strong, competent, intelligent and perhaps even a take-charge leader in her own right, and yet she melts when you take her, or when you speak sternly to her, you could take the opportunity to talk about Taken In Hand when you see that swoony look in her eye.

But a better idea is not to broach the subject at all. There is really no need for you as a husband to ask permission to take charge in your marriage, and if you try to get your wife to agree to that, that is a bit weak, and she may wonder what you are saying you want *her* to do, and she will not feel in the slightest bit like agreeing to anything.

And nor should she. If you want to take charge, you should take charge. That does not require your wife to agree to anything. She will respond to your taking charge. If she responds badly, you may need to make changes, or you may need to remain firm. You need to use your own judgement to determine whether or not the particular issue is one on which to stand firm or not.

Do take care to assure yourself, before you decide to stand firm on a particular issue, that that issue is reasonable and that it is consistent with putting your wife and the relationship first. If you were to start with more self-serving issues, then, unless they are relatively trivial, that might well cause your wife to react badly and reject the idea of Taken In Hand if you ever mention it.

Whether you want to broach the subject or just go ahead and start quietly taking charge, the best approach is to think about your partic-

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ular wife, and how Taken In Hand might be of interest to her as an individual, and make it relevant to your particular wife, and ensure that it will seem to be in her best interests *to her*. If you make it unpleasant for her why would she ever want it?!" Taken In Hand is supposed to be interesting, fun and exciting.³⁴⁴

"ARE YOU GETTING THROUGH TO HER?" (28 AUGUST 2007)

As I have previously pointed out in various posts, my wife and I went through a period early in our marriage when she wondered when I would ever learn that I was *not getting through* to her. At the time, I was unable to see things from a woman's perspective.

Years later, I came to the conclusion that *gentlemen do not stay married*. Actually, the preceding assessment is an oversimplification since I still open car doors for my wife and seat her in restaurants. Nevertheless, it gets the point across.

Despite the facade of civilization, women choose men for much the same reason as their maternal ances-

tors. Consequently, underneath all the touchy-feely, women expect men to be men when they need them to be men.

It is this primal drive—even primordial urge that is most probably incorporated in the interaction of the genes—that still draws women to men with a bit of the beast inside.

Women expect men to exhibit manliness in a timely fashion. In time, they will loath his timidity.

The difficulty for the man is complicated because women frequently expect the man to figure things out for himself. This seems to be a universal test of manhood through which women put men.

Despite some early successes in our relationship, I failed to understand that Taken in Hand consists of a continuation rather than occasional discrete events. Fortunately, my wife did not leave me in ignorance until it did irreparable damage to our marriage.

Our marriage floundered until my wife challenged me to put her over my lap and seriously discipline her with an old-fashioned American schoolhouse-style paddle.

The outcome immediately improved our marriage. My wife got up with a newfound respect that radiated from the inside.

As she put herself back together, she was obviously a very much a different woman. Our marriage has not been the same since.

I have since learned that my wife is not unique. Women want men able to take them in hand. They will both love and respect men for so doing.³⁴⁵

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **How do I broach the subject with my spouse?** To address the slightly different question of how to *persuade* a spouse that this might be a good idea, please leave your comments on "How can I persuade him to take control in our relationship?" or "I want us to have a Taken In Hand relationship. How can I persuade my wife?"]

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"ARE THERE HIDDEN POWER DYNAMICS IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP?" (19 SEPTEMBER 2007)

I'm curious as to why all the relationship books don't talk about the power/control dynamics in a relationship. My sister is going through a divorce right now, and the root cause of it all is a failure to identify and accept the power dynamic in their relationship. I've seen several other relationships end for the same reason.

Even though society throws around the word "equal", there is really no such thing as an equal relationship. In my group of girlfriends, there is an accepted leader. At work, at least in the professional world I'm in, there are the managers who have control handed to them by an org chart, and leaders that "officially" have no authority, yet the team would follow them off a cliff due to expertise, charisma, etc. Even in team sports, there are natural leaders (captains), even though there is no "I" in "team".

It seems to me that there are three major conditions necessary for making any relationship work, especially a Taken In Hand one:

The first is being compatible. This doesn't mean that you both have to be Republican (although it helps!), but that your core values align. For example, an atheist and a born-again Christian will have a hard time making it work if those attributes define them. For me and my husband, our core values include our faith, our engineering mindset (we both apply

similar techniques to problem-solving), and hockey.

The second aspect of a successful relationship is to recognize, accept, and incorporate the power dynamic. That's not to say that every relationship needs to be Taken In Hand, because it isn't for everyone. But in every relationship there is a natural ebb and flow in the dynamic that should be recognized and accepted. I promised to obey my husband, and he is the "leader" in our relationship. But not 100%. For example, we have realized that in new social situations that one way I can serve him is to take the lead. I'm comfortable feeling things out in new social settings; he is not.

But imagine how frustrating it would be for both of us if we didn't know this and accept it. We could walk into a new restaurant, and I could think "well, he's the head of the household, so he should take charge and get us settled in". He could be thinking "she always makes this so easy; I'll just sit back and wait for her to take care of us". We'd both end up frustrated because we didn't have a well-accepted dynamic to fall back on.

Imagine how this impacts couples that have no idea what their dynamic is! In our relationship, we state where the default is for me to lead based on our natural talents. If it isn't stated, then we both know the expectation is for him to do so. It definitely avoids the "I don't know, whatcha wanna do" conversations that cluttered my youth!

The third, and most important aspect of any relationship, but especially one with an established power

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dynamic, is communication. As my husband puts it: to trust someone is to make yourself vulnerable to them. And to communicate in a trusting fashion is to acknowledge that you trust someone, and to give them the bare truth and *trust* that they won't use it as a weapon against you. It takes everyone years to develop this skill that is so useful to making a Taken In Hand relationship work.³⁴⁶

"COMMUNICATION DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EXPLICIT, DIRECT OR VERBAL" (22 SEPTEMBER 2007)

A while back, my business wasn't doing well. We were having trouble paying some of our personal bills because there wasn't enough money coming in.

At the end of a long week, I was driving home and called my wife. I told her to get dressed-up so I could take her out to dinner. She, predictably, complained that we couldn't afford it I—just as predictably—barked at her to do as I told her, and then hung up on her.

When I arrived home, I was ready to launch into a tirade, but she met me at the door—stark naked.

For a moment, I was caught off guard. I expected she might be in jeans and a T-shirt or dolled up and ready to go out to dinner.

I wasn't prepared for nudity.

In that moment of uncertainty, she kissed me, wrapping herself around me and pressing her body into me. A moment later, we looked into each other's eyes, saying nothing.

She turned and bent over the arm of the couch.

I gave her a back rub and we talked—about my Aunt Marta.

After a few minutes, we turned out the lights and went upstairs. I washed up and Elle put on a black satin nightgown—a gown similar to the one that Aunt Marta had given her as a wedding present.

After we made love, we went to sleep.

The apologies, the discussion of whether to go out to dinner or stay home and do something else, her offer to be punished, my decline, her suggestion of what to wear to bed and my acceptance—all of that was spoken in subtext.

My point?

Communication skills are extremely important. One of the most important of those skills is learning how to communicate without hurting and without forcing each other to admit fault.

Sometimes the best way of doing that is *not* to talk directly about what is bothering you. Shared experiences can provide a "language" that is more gentle and soothing than plain English.

Communication doesn't have to be explicit, direct or even verbal. It just has to happen.³⁴⁷

"TAKEN IN HAND IS LOW-KEY AND PRI- VATE, NOT A 'LIFESTYLE'" (22 SEPTEMBER 2007)

A D/s person on the yahoo group wrote:

The site professes that [Taken In Hand] is different than a D/s lifestyle. Someone want to explain how

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this is so? Because I just don't see the difference. From what I see the dynamics are basically the same. Whitewash it any way you wish . . . The problem [Taken In Hand] people seem to have is accepting their roles and taking responsibility in those roles.

D/s is very much *in your face* in its approach to specific roles. They advertise. In reality, D/s has simply taken one aspect of the Taken in Hand relationship and exaggerated it. "Dominants" are proud to be dominant. "Submissives" are proud to be submissive. When compared to Taken in Hand relationships, there is too much *he* and *she* and not enough *we* in the D/s lifestyle.

On the other hand, Taken in Hand is very low key. Taken in Hand couples are very difficult—if not impossible—to spot in a crowd. One woman might be the young mother wearing a Big Ten alumni sweatshirt, blue jeans, and sneakers holding her child as she stands in the checkout line at the grocery store. Another might be that nice older lady conducting historical tours and patiently answering the same inane question four dozen times a day—five days a week.

Moreover, despite the stereotype of the stay-at-home mother with minimal marketable skills, Taken in Hand women can be quite independent. One might be an MBA. Another could be a former beauty queen running a successful dance studio. Still another might be a pediatrician. Most of the men are equally indistinguishable from their peers. One might be a steeplejack during the week and a Little League coach

on the weekends. Another may be a bookish professor of anthropology at a local college. These men are quietly self-confident. They have little need to impress anyone with their authority—especially if it involves pointing out that they run the show at home.

Women in Taken in Hand frequently report that their husbands are both patient and complimentary. Words of praise are profuse and sincere. A helping hand is readily available. In Taken in Hand relationships in which spanking occurs, it is merely one means among many to making a stronger marriage. A very private spanking to straighten out a marriage does not a lifestyle make! Thus, while, these couples seldom stand out in a crowd, they tend to stay married and remain faithful to each other. In fact, Taken in Hand is so normal and natural that it often has no name.³⁴⁸

"BE CAREFUL WHEN SHE RELAXES HER DEFENSES" (25 SEPTEMBER 2007)

I just had an experience that made me realize what delicate creatures women—and probably men for that matter—are on the inside.

When a woman finds a leading man she can trust it allows her to relax let down her defenses and be her delicate and beautiful inner self. The man must be very careful to not betray her trust because anyone with their defenses down can be hurt very easily.

Similarly it seems that not challenging a man allows him to drop his defenses and to relax and be his

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inner self that can also be easily be betrayed or hurt.

It seems a mistake to not acknowledge how vulnerable and open the tender emotions make us. Guarding that and respecting that seems the most important thing that can happen in a relationship.

Being in a Taken In Hand relationship makes a person particularly open and vulnerable, and each person needs to respect that and be careful.

I missed this vital issue, led too strongly and made a major mistake and scared a woman very badly.

So this is my warning for all of the other guys out there. Be careful when the woman you are with relaxes her defenses. Take care of her and defend her: don't carelessly hurt her.³⁴⁹

"STOP LIVING IN DENIAL AND START BECOMING HEALTHY" (30 SEPTEMBER 2007)

I think there is a population of men who have found themselves in relationships where the roles they had expected themselves to fill are not realized because the female partner is behaving inconsiderately, and the male partner does not feel entitled to assert himself. The latter in my opinion is the fault of misinterpreted feminism, which to a large extent has focused on emasculating men as a means to promote women's rights.

Men are really pretty good at coping with this situation. We can withdraw from relationships where our partners appear to have no interest

in the masculine qualities we were expecting to bring to the table. So we focus on our jobs, go to our ball games and our dens and we spend time with our friends instead. Lots of men live very well like this for lifetimes.

The women are really the victims in this situation. Women can handle a lot but do not cope well with lack of love and attention. So they find themselves frustrated, depressed and in a state that is generally known as "life ache" in my part of the world. The condition often translates to physical illness if it continues over many years.

Some women are smart enough to analyze their situation and understand what they have been missing. A few of these are brave enough to speak with their husbands about it, and a subset of these will get a positive response from a husband, who will understand that he is now being offered what he was missing in the first place.³⁵⁰

"THE FEW TIMES SHE HAS ACTUALLY TALKED ABOUT IT" (1 OCTOBER 2007)

I mentioned in a previous post that communication doesn't have to be literal or direct. For Elle and me, that has been particularly true.

Over the past few years, we've moved to a Taken in Hand relationship with very little direct discussion. That's the way Elle wants it.

If you read my posts from several years ago ([click here](#)) you will see a man frustrated by a woman who wanted to be taken without giving consent. I was sorely tempted to

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force her to talk about it—but I resisted the temptation.

We have spoken directly about it on a very few occasions. Here is one of the most important exchanges, almost verbatim:

Her: “Why are you getting angry at Kara [a coworker]? Why are you yelling at her but you won't yell at me? You haven't yelled at me in months!”

Me: “What? Are you actually jealous that I'm angry at another woman?”

Her: (Screaming) “Yes! God damn it! I want you to get mad at *me*! I want you to yell at *me*! You never get mad at me anymore!” (Bursts into tears).

Of course, she didn't want to talk about it any more than that, so I was left to figure it out. Why would she want me to yell at her instead of calming down and discussing things?

Somehow, I knew that she didn't really mean “yell”. Eventually, I realized that she wanted my anger voiced directly at her instead of being vented elsewhere.

So, the next time I was upset about something, instead of calming myself down, I got “in her face”.

I didn't actually raise my voice, but I let my feelings show in the *intensity* of my voice, and I let the anger show on my face.

I told her exactly how I felt. My words were harsh, hurting her in a way that only a husband can, by pushing those hidden hot-buttons.

But there was no swearing, no belittling and no demeaning—no “dirty fighting”. In my mind, it was cruel to the point of being abusive.

Yet somehow I knew that it was what she wanted.

As I “yelled” at her without yelling, she looked frightened—scared half to death—but she didn't run away and didn't argue.

She listened intently, and when I was done, she threw her arms around me and held me tighter than she had in years—thanking me for what I had done and said.

... and she still didn't want to talk about it.

I did it two more times, several months apart, both with good results—and I had a much more loving and passionate wife in between “episodes”.

The next time, instead of “yelling” at her—or whatever we want to call it—I asked her why she wanted me to yell at her. Why couldn't I calm down first and then talk to her.

She laughed, finally understanding and finally able to voice her own feelings.

Her: “It's not that I *want* you to yell at me,” she said, “but I want to know where I stand. It makes me feel safe. It's better if you yell at me than if you go off and fume.”

Me: “Is it that you want to know that I can control my anger? Or is it that it turns you on?”

She didn't answer me with words, but her body was eloquent.

Much of that exchange was shaped by the things I've read here. I've said little things to her at times based on what I've learned from this site. They seem to soak in.

She has picked up some of the vocabulary along the way—and uses it from time to time in her indirect way of saying things.

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That's how it's been for us. A sentence or two twice a year or so is all I get. But she tells me things in a host of other ways. When I get it right, she throws herself at me—something she rarely does otherwise.

Indirect communication can be blatant at times.

Why doesn't she simply talk about it? Mostly because it's more romantic this way—and she has always been a romantic at heart. She read romance novels growing up and still reads lots of books with strong male characters.

She wants me to “just know” what to do—how to be strong for her—because of the romance.

... but there's more to it than that.

Her mother was very repressive. She can't bring herself to admit that she finds the whole “Taken in Hand thing” erotic. There's too much deeply-embedded shame that she can't get past.

I have to do it *for* her, so that it “isn't her fault”.

Sometimes, the only way I know that she likes something is because she is happier afterward—despite saying “no” or resisting or crying or even flat out telling me that she “hates” it.

When I really need to know, I ask her. Usually, the answer is in the form of a kiss (or something more intensely physical).

And once or twice a year or so—she might actually talk about it.³⁵¹

On this thread about the misery of a wife whose husband uses pornography, Good Girl wrote:

It is not my place to tell my husband what he can and can not do. It is my place to respect him for who he is.

There is a difference between accepting a man as your “master” and actually respecting him, and between simply acting in a respectful manner and admiring a man who has earned your respect.

In a Taken In Hand relationship, it is indeed not your place to *tell* your husband (who should be a leader and not a narcissist) what he can and cannot do. But it *is* your place, and your *responsibility*, to him as well as to yourself, to tell him how you feel and what you need.

Different women have different needs as a result of the combination of how they are “wired” and their life experiences, and that is why it can be almost impossible for a man to “just know” what his particular woman needs, unless he is psychic or she loves him enough to tell him. And trial and error is such a poor and unfulfilling substitute.

It is not your place to dictate to your husband, but it is his place to care about your emotional as well as your physical well-being. And why would you want to be with a man who didn't?

A good leader will take your needs and desires into account, and then make the decision that he feels would be best for your relationship. And a good man will value your needs and desires, your happiness

“WHEN VISUAL PORNOGRAPHY MAKES A WIFE FEEL DEVALUED” (4 OCTOBER 2007)

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and quality of life, at least as much as his own.

I would rather know what he is doing than make him feel like he needs to hide it from me. It is the need to hide one's interest from your partner that tears couples apart. Being open, honest, respectful, understanding and non-judgmental of each other's differences is important.

I agree with you. But doesn't being open and honest require you to tell him about yourself?

And before being "non-judgmental" can be beneficial and good, the two people involved in the relationship must first have a fundamental compatibility. The specifics vary from person to person, but tend to be subconsciously non-negotiable, in the sense that compromise can create a festering resentment.

For example, for me, absolute exclusivity and loyalty are at the very top of the list. We would have to be willing to work on satisfying our sexual needs between only the two of us, and without diluting our connection or devaluing each other by inviting the second-hand participation of visual pornography.

I am *not* saying that this is the "one true way," or that it is important or even relevant to everyone. But when it is relevant, it tends to be very, very important.

I limited my example to "visual" pornography because stories can be a great way to communicate, become enlightened and get new ideas. Stories allow you to picture your partner in those scenarios, while

expectations remain somewhat vague.

But, when you watch a performance, you are engaging mentally with the actors in some way, and at least subconscious expectations are being created. And if only one partner finds this type of interaction appealing, it can create feelings of inadequacy and of not being valued. And expectations can become inhibiting.

Within a few essentials, such as my example, I would give my woman an unconditional acceptance, understanding and support, while remaining in control and continuing to lead our relationship.

But what I would actually be doing is *judging* that the core characteristics that make her who she is also represent my highest values, and *then* making the conscious decisions that:

- 1) I wouldn't allow myself to fall into the bad habit of automatically and unthinkingly nitpicking differences that were trivial and unimportant to me, because my doing so wouldn't be trivial or unimportant to her.

- 2) I would appreciate what I had in her every "one more day" that I was lucky enough to have her around, and would never take her for granted. And then her habits and quirks would become endearing qualities, and the jungle of drying pantyhose would only reassure me that she was still there.

- 3) Home would be a place of safety and a source of energy for both of us. Since I would be in control, guiding it to become a place of security and warmth would be my responsi-

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bility, and a big part of that would involve bringing her to the point where it no longer occurred to her to feel self-conscious.

One way of doing this would be to consistently reassure and show her that her core characteristics made her irrevocably perfect for me; that I was fundamentally neutral about anything that I wasn't "wired" to appreciate; and that since I was fundamentally crazy about her, it made me happy to be accepting and supportive, even when I didn't understand her needs from personal experience.

Because of her enduring value, whatever made her happy or was important to her would become meaningful and important to me.

But if some of her inclinations were bad for her or for our relationship, acceptance, understanding and support would include abundant reassurance that she was still as loved, respected and valued as ever, along with insistence on change and spankings whenever necessary.

There is a huge difference between forcing yourself to be non-judgmental, in opposition to your nature, needs and knowledge, and recognizing when being judgmental isn't appropriate and would simply be self-indulgent.

But this becomes very serious when differences in perspective make a woman feel inadequate and unworthy, or not loved and valued, because this can cause physically destructive stress, in addition to emotional damage.

In such a situation, a life-affirming relationship doesn't exist. And, at least by this point, she *must* explain

the situation to her partner, but she should *never* fall into the trap of trying to justify why her feelings and needs should have value.

If he loves her, he values her and will change his behavior permanently to protect her and help her to heal. But if he decides to disregard her well-being by demanding that she devalue and suppress her essence to satisfy his whims, she is in a destructive and self-destructive situation and should leave him and find a true partner.

Isn't taking care of each other and enjoying each other's happiness the point of a life-affirming relationship?³⁵²

"AVAILABILITY AND RAPE" (14 OCTOBER 2007)

I "rape" my girlfriend regularly. She knows that whenever I want sex, she must submit to my desire without question. It's simple for her and simple for me. She is totally available sexually for me whenever I want BUT the foundation for this intensely erotic and ultimately deeply emotional exchange is that she is treated by me as a queen, a jewel, an incomparable and peerless precious and adorable woman who I worship.

She is sexually satisfied in a way she previously never dreamed possible. She knows how much I love her and one of the ways I show my deep love for her is to take her sexually and forcefully whenever I choose.

"Rape" in this context is my demanding sexual ravishment of her

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without her request or expressed desire: she has has abrogated all responsibility in the realm of sex to me. She also knows that my desire for her is limitless and this gives her the most profound sense of being wanted and her deep satisfaction is intensified by her openly avowed availability to me. I cannot begin to describe how closely this dynamic bonds us together.

This astonishingly erotic exchange exists only because I also express in words and deeds my all-encompassing love for her in all ways beyond the solely sexual realm.

Powerful stuff: I treat it with care and live and love in a way I never imagined before.³⁵³

"SHOULD LOVE BE WILLING TO SHARE?" (17 OCTOBER 2007)

That depends on what you mean by love and what love means to you.

One illustration is the question asked by a Rose (on the Yahoo site):

Help! I don't know what to do. My boyfriend and I are slowly starting a Taken In Hand relationship. Most of our relationship is already great, except for one thing. His friends from work go out to the strip club occasionally, and he likes to go with them. ... He knew I had a problem with it, but I finally told him I wouldn't mind if he went because I felt guilty about keeping him from his friends. I got so disgusted that I didn't even want him to touch me. We got into a huge fight the next night about it. So my question is: am I supposed to submit to his wanting to go, or is he supposed to care enough about my feelings to not go?

The replies to this question show that some people think that this is about pornography and "co-dependence." Both of these issues are relevant, but I think that it all comes down to:

Is he supposed to care enough about my feelings?

Visual pornography can still have significant effects, even if most people don't end up having it dominate their lives. For example, one of the replies to Rose echoed a common complaint:

Do you also tell him he can't look at porn or masturbate without you being present?

But this begs the question of why it should be expected that a man in a sexual relationship with a willing woman would want to masturbate while looking at porn.

And the *New York Magazine* article *The Porn Myth*^{*} provides an articulate, coherent and reasonable answer:

For most of human history, erotic images have been reflections of, or celebrations of, or substitutes for, real naked women. For the first time in human history, the images' power and allure have supplanted that of real naked women.

Today, real naked women are just bad porn. ...

The young women who talk to me on campuses about the effect of por-

^{*} See: <https://web.archive.org/web/20130127173331/http://nymag.com/ny-metro/news/trends/n_9437/>

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nography on their intimate lives speak of feeling that they can never measure up, that they can never ask for what *they* want; and that if they do not offer what porn offers, they cannot expect to hold a guy. The young men talk about what it is like to grow up learning about sex from porn, and how it is not helpful to them in trying to figure out how to be with a real woman. Mostly, when I ask about loneliness, a deep, sad silence descends on audiences of young men and young women alike. They know they are lonely together, even when conjoined, and that this imagery is a big part of that loneliness. What they don't know is how to get out, how to find each other again erotically, face-to-face. ...

If you associate orgasm with your wife, a kiss, a scent, a body, that is what, over time, will turn you on; if you open your focus to an endless stream of ever-more-transgressive images of cybersex slaves, that is what it will take to turn you on. The ubiquity of sexual images does not free eros but dilutes it. ...

I will never forget a visit I made to Ilana, an old friend [with waist-length, wild and curly golden-blond hair] who had become an Orthodox Jew in Jerusalem. When I saw her again, she had abandoned her jeans and T-shirts for long skirts and a head scarf. ... "Only my husband," she said with a calm sexual confidence, "ever gets to see my hair." ... the sexual intensity in the air was archaic, overwhelming. It was private. It was a feeling of erotic intensity deeper than any I have ever picked up between secular couples in the liberated West. And I thought: Our husbands see naked women all day — in Times Square if not on the Net. Her husband never even sees another woman's hair.

She must feel, I thought, so hot.

Compare that steaminess with a conversation I had at Northwestern, after I had talked about the effect of porn on relationships. ... [a boy explained] "I prefer to have sex right away just to get it over with. You know it's going to happen anyway, and it gets rid of the tension." "Isn't the tension kind of fun?" I asked. "Doesn't that also get rid of the mystery?" "Mystery?" He looked at me blankly. And then, without hesitating, he replied: "I don't know what you're talking about. Sex has no mystery."

Visual porn can defraud men by diverting them from experiencing deep intimacy, to instead using a woman merely for masturbation. But even if porn didn't desensitize, it would always "program," because of the way that the brain processes images.

When you watch a performance, you are engaging mentally with the presentation and at least subconscious expectations are being created. But the same is not true for stories, which can be a great way to communicate, become enlightened and get new ideas. Stories allow you to picture your partner in those scenarios, while expectations remain somewhat vague. So pornography can be beneficial, as long as it doesn't become a second-hand participant instead of a template.

As RhodeIslandRose said:

To us, the use of pornography is that it helps to express fantasies or desires that perhaps we're embarrassed or don't know how to express on our own. ... What I'm trying to say is that there is nothing really wrong with porn (IMHO), so long as

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it is something that is bringing you together instead of keeping you apart.

So instead, what we do now is make our own porn, so to speak. We don't take dirty pictures or anything, that's not really our thing. But, for example, I've been known to send my husband an email describing one of my fantasies in the middle of the work day. He'll whisper his into my ear when we're curled in bed together at night ...

Experimenting, and laughing together as you make inevitable mistakes, brings you closer. And being anywhere close to perfect is never the point; a relationship is not a performance.

When a couple watches a porn video together, they can end up with preconceptions and expectations about how they should act and respond, from a stylized and edited presentation, instead of being able to freely imagine and anticipate, as they would from stories, or messages sent to each other. But whether this will create problems depends on the people involved.

On the other hand, inevitable problems arise when only one partner finds porn beneficial or even acceptable. If we are our minds and not just our bodies, a mental almost-relationship, like masturbating over porn or fantasizing about other people while having sex with your partner, is a form of infidelity — infidelity in the heart and mind.

This can be the most devastating to women, because the casual-sex justification that it was "only physical" doesn't apply.

Another comment to Rose was that "Additionally, he should NOT give much weight if any to those feelings you have that come from 'within your own head' and aren't the result of any direct actual impact on you or your life."

All feelings exist in our minds. They can be expressions of our nature and needs, such as compassion and vulnerability, and they can be a response to an external injury, and so on.

The actions of an unrelated person, unless someone is being coerced into an involuntary transaction, are none of your business.

However, when a person intentionally enters into a personal relationship with you, the behavior of that person can never be completely independent of you, because it will have a "direct actual impact on you and your life" through your emotional connection.

As one Taken In Hand reader said, "My DH says he buys porno to get himself in the mood to do me, but what is wrong with me that he needs that? He says he only does it occasionally, but it is insulting and hurtful, even if it is only once a month or once a year."

And, regardless of whether this is because men become desensitized or for some other reason, for those women for whom this would be devastating, it will harm them, the relationship, or everyone involved, because it is such a difficult issue. And it makes them feel not only unattractive and ugly, but inadequate as a woman and even worthless. It also makes many devastated women feel suicidal, and pushes

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some into parasuicidal behaviour, like wrist slashing, burning themselves, anorexia/bulimia, etc.

A woman should never have to justify her feelings, or debate why her feelings and needs should have value. If her man loves her, he values her and will change his behavior to protect her and help her to heal. But if he decides to disregard her well-being by demanding that she devalue and suppress herself to satisfy his whims, she is in a destructive and self-destructive situation, and should leave him and find a true partner.

Being dominant and having the final say in decisions does *not* become some narcissistic right to second-guess a woman when she reveals her vulnerabilities. Indifference is proof of an absence of love, and a person without the capacity for empathy is not fixable.

There are many ways to generate erotic intensity, but two very simple and effective ones recognize the natural modesty of many women. Make your woman feel so loved and valued that she becomes serenely confident, confident enough for it to stop occurring to her to feel self-conscious. Provide the boundaries and security of exclusivity, a loving and loyal relationship within which she can reveal and revel in her innate sexuality without feeling like a slut.

One "mystery of sex" is how increasing the psychological connection can redefine the intensity and scope of an orgasm. Bodies have rather limited capabilities and different ones offer little actual novelty. "Variety" is not the repetition of a

mindless routine with an endless parade of similar detached partners. But emotional and mental possibilities are unlimited, and can dramatically amplify any experience and create deep connections with a trusting and willingly vulnerable partner.

For example, beyond taking her in dominant Taken In Hand ways, my fantasies are less about doing something specific to my woman, and more about exploring with her and discovering what she finds arousing and thrilling, what excites and scares her, and especially what she is embarrassed to admit that she desires, and then "controlling" her into fiery orgasms by pushing her limits, increasing the intensity to a bit beyond what she would have chosen for herself, to the point where she is begging for it to stop while hoping that it will continue.

The form of the emotional and mental intensity would be tailored specifically to her, and it would magnify her experience way out of proportion to the actual physical effects.

She would know that she was loved and completely safe, while neither being given a choice nor being overwhelmed, so she would have the confidence and "permission" to surrender and reveal herself by letting go completely. Trust followed by surrender results in mind-blowing experiences; and vulnerability that is protected and treasured creates profound connections.

And I would be responding to the thrill of having power over her, to her arousal, and especially to her desire and willingness to reveal herself to me (and note that this

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is *not* the same as simply submitting to me).

But this isn't something that I would be doing "to" her. Instead, we would both be participating equally, but in different ways, in activities that would allow us to connect at ever deeper levels.

These levels are possible because focused interaction feeds back on itself. Her enthusiastic participation, her desire and arousal, and especially the attention and energy that she directed at me, would energize me and then be reflected, amplified, back at her.

And while intensity would ebb and flow, just like everything else in life, this ping-pong reassurance and reinforcement would be continuous, not just sexually, but in every aspect of our life. But this wouldn't be possible if we were widening our focus, instead of concentrating on engaging with each other.

And this can be taken much, much further, in direct proportion to the bonds that have been built, and the understanding and trust that have been developed.

It can be taken to the level of being able to *live* primordial emotions, to the level of his being a "predator" and of her experiencing the arousal, helplessness and even fear that she desires, as reality *in the moment*, without having to protect themselves in any way. It would be primeval and without safe-words, but with a constant protective undercurrent of unspoken communication, an almost-psycho connection, that allows him to sense immediately if anything starts to go wrong.

She is able to let her guard down completely, without reservation, and make herself more vulnerable than many people can imagine, because she knows, with absolute certainty, that she is his only value and that there is no chance that she will be injured, deliberately or negligently, physically or emotionally. This involves a level of awareness, confidence and willing vulnerability far beyond anything possible in a relationship with a wide focus, or one in which there is the possibility of being cut with words that can't be unsaid (including as "teasing"), or one that is dealing with elementary issues of trust and worth, such as being devalued by porn and strip clubs, and so on.

As someone on this site wrote:

In a sexual relationship, you can choose to concentrate your focus on one person, magnifying your attraction to that person and attuning yourself sexually ever more to that particular person, or you can focus your attention and arousal more widely, actively looking at, thinking about and fantasising about others. For most people, when you do the latter, sexual exclusivity is more likely to feel like a suffocating prison, and when you do the former, you get more and more sexually-connected with your spouse.

Noticing is different from actively and intentionally seeking arousal. It is quite unusual to become actually aroused by admiring a nice body on the street. It is a fleeting thing, it is not intentional and you do not engage with it actively to any significant degree. But when you deliber-

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ately watch a porn film or go to a strip club, you are intentionally setting out to arouse yourself with someone other than your partner.

And, in many cases, the man is doing this despite the fact that he knows that his woman can't handle it. He does it anyway, and the woman's distress is discounted as control and little empathy is forthcoming. But wouldn't a good man care that his actions are actually causing distress, instead of engaging in debates about why his activities shouldn't be causing anguish? And doesn't this highlight his priorities and what he values most?

And which would be more of a sexual connection between a man and his woman: thinking about someone else while having sex with her body, or thinking about her while masturbating alone?

Positive fantasies about your partner increase your attachment to your partner, and you can indeed "connect" through a fantasy because it is model in your mind of what you find appealing or at least would like to explore. And fantasizing about your partner in an optimistic way can improve your connection, because you are reinforcing favorable attitudes, and mentally experimenting and rehearsing various possibilities as templates for real life. In a similar way, actively and intentionally fantasizing about someone else (but *not* just having a fleeting thought or image "pop into your head") can diminish your attachment to your partner.

Another common opinion was that Rose must still need to "grow up," since she got so disgusted that she

didn't even want him to touch her. One reply even instructed her to go to the strip club with her boyfriend, in a sexual way, because he would move WAY up in the standings with the guys, which is great for the ego.

And yet, as Ayn Rand said:

Physically, sex is merely a capacity. But *how a man will exercise this capacity and whom he will find attractive depends on his standard of value....* [emphasis mine]

Sex is an expression of a man's self-esteem, of his own self-value. But the man who does not value himself tries to reverse this process. He tries to derive his self-esteem from his sexual conquests, which cannot be done.

Rose is the mature and sophisticated one in her relationship, and she became disgusted because she correctly inferred his values (at least as they are now), and realized that, in a way, she was equivalent to his lowest common denominator.

And "co-dependency" seems to be a favorite default criticism, such as the following comment to Rose, by those looking for a way to evade naming what they are and what they do.

For any person to go around modifying their thoughts, words or actions out of fear over someone else's "feelings" ... is by definition co-dependent.

In the thread "Is co-dependency a bad thing in a relationship?," 'the boss' wrote:

The co-dependence idea seems to get out of hand at times, with some being so fearful of being in a co-

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dependent relationship that they go to enormous lengths to assert their independence and end up never actually having a deep relationship. It seems to me more interesting to risk a little of what some might exaggeratedly call co-dependence, or at least, to be in a fully engaged relationship rather than maintaining all your barriers and defences and ensuring that you remain rigidly separate.

To me, it seems as though those who feel such a need to retain this sort of so-called independence are actually the individuals whose psychological autonomy is fragile. Some of those who can risk a bit of what is pejoratively called co-dependence can be paradoxically more deeply independent and autonomous.

However, this is not always the case. There are plenty of unhealthily co-dependent individuals living miserable lives with no self respect and highly dysfunctional psychologies and behaviours. This is definitely not what a Taken In Hand relationship should be. These individuals are not happy by any stretch of the imagination, and I can quite understand why some Taken In Hand folk make a point of avoiding any hint of co-dependence.

“Co-dependency” is a technical term with relatively narrow applicability, which is explained quite nicely by a professional psychologist, Dr. Willard F. Harley, Jr., in *How the Co-dependency Movement Is Ruining Marriages*.

But, outside its legitimate use, it is often used incorrectly to disparage healthy *interdependence*, which is frequently a hallmark of Taken In Hand relationships. And people who take these smears at face value

can be scared into avoiding any hint of co-dependence.

In healthy interdependence, self-destructive behaviors (such as substance abuse) are *not* being enabled or facilitated, and *both* partners are actively taking care of each other (so one isn't being emotionally starved by the indifferent other who is claiming “suffocation”).

Beneficial interdependence is life-affirming, and its prerequisites are the strength to take responsibility for understanding and caring for the needs of your partner (you certainly can't sleep through this type of a relationship!), and the strength to allow yourself to be ever more vulnerable to your partner without protecting yourself by “having one eye on the end of the relationship.”

As someone on this site wrote:

I met a woman who had never gone anywhere without her husband the other day. She was 76 years old ... As she talked about her late husband, her eyes shone. They had been married 58 years. She had been exceptionally happy with her husband and it showed in her face. Who would give up a gloriously happy marriage in the name of acting as though it will one day end?

In a relationship between soul-mates, taking care of your partner's needs is the opposite of a burden, and there is no self-sacrifice involved when both individuals in a relationship are putting each other first. They both end up being the center of attention, and are able to relax and fully enjoy “love-based service” without guilt. And they both get more than they would have

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as self-centered individuals, because energy given is energy multiplied (and even chocolate tastes better when it is a gift from your love).

A common negative rationale is that "it is impossible to get everything that you need from just one person." And "everything that you need" is intended to conjure images of an unending list with minutiae that nobody could possibly match. But, in reality, people have relatively few needs, which can be satisfied in many ways. You could easily write down all of my needs on the palm of your hand. What about yours?

I think that two people, if they are true equals or have unlimited potential (which amounts to the same thing), and have the desire, can indeed and absolutely *grow into* being able to satisfy all of each other's emotional, mental and physical needs. This wouldn't happen overnight but, for me, the point of the journey would also be the journey itself. Experiencing the love in her struggles would give me more pleasure, and release more energy that would be dedicated to her, than if she didn't have to strive and learn, and could do everything perfectly from the start.

And it is natural and healthy for two people who invest in each other, and especially those who are willing to put all of their energy into satisfying each other and being available only for each other, to be protective and possessive. "In fact, who in the hell would want a relationship in which there were *no* possibility that either party would ever feel jealous? To be so blasÃ© about everything ... What kind of relationship would

that be? It is time to stop pathologising perfectly natural and healthy jealousy."

In this type of intimate relationship, both of the people involved progressively diminish the occurrence of jealousy in the other, not only by being faithful and loyal, but also by consistently and *actively* focusing all of their personal attention, interest and energy only on each other. They actively and *enthusiastically* look for ways to create and deepen their connections; simply "being in sync" isn't even close to being enough.

I am *not* saying that this type of relationship is the "one true way" or that it is appropriate for everyone. But, when it is appropriate, it tends to be essential, and it has absolute prerequisites and unavoidable tradeoffs.

And I rather suspect that many women who are derisively called "clingy and needy," or even "suffocating and obsessive," are actually just trying to create this level of intimate relationship, but with an unsuitable or inadequate man.

I like a clingy and needy woman because having her around reduces my stress and releases my energy. And I think that women have been conned, sometimes to the point of damaging their relationships, into thinking that there is actually something wrong with being "needy."

I try to tell him how I feel but as I get ready I can't get the words out ... I chicken out and email him things only because I can't say them without having this needy feeling about me ...

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I guess I don't want him to see me as
a needy person ... [from *beb222*]

feeling to us then they are to anyone
else.

Masculine men, especially those of the Taken In Hand variety, *need* to be needed, and they *like* to protect and take care of their women. And when a woman who has such a man deliberately hides her needs, she is unfairly and unnecessarily depriving *both* of them of part of a fulfilling life together.

Many of the most intelligent and capable people I have known were women who were quite needy in their personal relationships. It always seemed to be that the women with the greatest wisdom, resilience and strength of spirit were the ones who were brave enough to reveal the full extent of their need to their men.

And a Taken In Hand woman chooses to have her man make decisions for her because this gives her peace and security, but only after he has earned her trust and demonstrated wisdom in judgment, and has shown her that she would not only be his "possession" but also his only treasure.

But Rose was even told to go to the strip club with her boyfriend because that was the way to "*stake a little territory over [her] man with the strippers,*" and that:

Yes you are supposed to submit. That is the agreement you have made in a Taken In Hand relationship. He is supposed to "factor in" how his actions directly affect you and thus your feelings. [But] he probably won't factor them in to the degree that you want because our own feelings are always WAY more powerful

In a Taken In Hand relationship, it is the woman who is taken and protected. She is definitely *not* expected to fight for possession of a wayward man, or to have her needs met by accident. Taken In Hand is a relationship, unequal in power, between mutually dependent partners who consider each other equal in value and with an equal right to dignity, respect and self-fulfillment.

Narcissists and bullies always seem to remember that, in a Taken In Hand relationship, it is not the woman's place to dictate to her man, but somehow conveniently forget that it is the man's place, and his highest responsibility, to protect his woman's emotional and physical well-being.

The basis of Taken In Hand is male *leadership*, and not merely the thrills of control and sexual conquest. A good leader will be dominant and in control, but not domineering or controlling. He will realize that he isn't omniscient and will seek his woman's input and wisdom, and only then make the decision that he feels would be best for their relationship. And a good man will value her needs and desires, and especially her happiness and quality of life, *at least as much as his own*.

Isn't taking care of each other and enjoying each other's happiness the point of a life-affirming relationship?

A loving relationship never seemed to me like something that could be just another part of life, just another variation stapled onto the

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rear end of a collection of other equally important stuff. Instead, it always felt like it should be the difference between existence and life.

A woman becomes vulnerable by opening her heart, by no longer pretending or pushing away in order to protect herself, by saying, in a sense, "this is all that I am," and trusting that she will be essential and that she will be enough.

If you give away something of value, then you value the reaction or the recipient more than the treasure itself.

And I think that being with your love is being alive, and everything else is everything else.

So, no, I don't think that love can share.³⁵⁴

"WHY DO MANY TAKEN IN HAND FOLK REJECT THE D/S LABEL?" (22 OCTOBER 2007)

Why do many Taken In Hand folk reject the D/s label? What is the difference between Taken In Hand and D/s (or BDSM, M/s, etc.)?

Some D/s (or BDSM, M/s, etc.) relationships are Taken In Hand relationships, but many are not.

A Taken In Hand relationship is, *inter alia*, a permanent, sexually exclusive, fully committed *marriage*. There are some such marriages within the D/s (or BDSM or M/s) community, but those terms (D/s, BDSM, M/s) do not necessarily imply even a relationship, let alone a permanent, sexually exclusive, fully committed marriage.

Labels like D/s, BDSM and M/s, etc., can apply to open or poly rela-

tionships and casual sex, mentorship relationships of finite duration, and relationships in which the dominant partner reserves the right to have sex with whomever he wishes, irrespective of his partner's feelings about that. Indeed, in many cases, it is frowned upon as bad form for submissive individuals not to meekly accept such a state of affairs. That idea is as unappealing to Taken In Hand couples as Taken In Hand is unappealing to many D/s folk. Our preferences differ.

I hope this does not sound holier than thou. Indeed one of the things that does not appeal to me about the online D/s/M/s/BDSM world is that there are so many insults, holier than thou judgements and snobbish, scathing comments that completely take for granted various questionable ideas (such as, for example, the idea that there is a hierarchy of submissiveness with the lofty slave being at the top of the ladder, and the alleged faux-sub being beneath the bottom rung, and a lot of tedious discussion about who has a right to call himself a master, etc). But to be fair, many a RL TPE/M/s-/D/s person feels the same way about that. Many of them enjoy this site. Regrettably, we too sometimes have similarly objectionable comments here despite heavily discouraging them. I mention this merely to explain one of my personal reasons for wanting the Taken In Hand site to remain outside the online D/s/M/s/BDSM world rather than becoming subject to what seem to me its oppressively narrow and rigid prescriptions and proscriptions.

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Taken In Hand is just one set of many possible preferences. Within Taken In Hand there are millions of individual variations. We all start from our own perspective and sometimes think we know best and that others are wrong, but I am at least trying to correct such mistakes in my thinking. I try to remember that I'm not actually an omniscient, infallible god, but just a mere mortal who makes a lot of mistakes. I recognise that my preferences are merely *my preferences*. In no way do I think that everyone should share my preferences. I am a staunch supporter of the idea of individual freedom, including the freedom of others not to share my preferences in any way.

The Taken In Hand site is not a sex site: we focus on the psychology and the relationship rather than sexual practices. On most D/s/BDSM/M/s sites there is a huge amount of focus on sexual interactions and practices.

Whilst the Taken In Hand is not a sex site, the purpose of the Taken In Hand relationship is to create a white-hot sexual connection that permanently bonds husband and wife together in a vibrantly happy relationship that will last a lifetime. Taken In Hand is sexy and fun or intensely erotic. If it were not, why bother?

On the other hand, many in the D/s world take the view that D/s is a very serious matter, not at all about having fun, and that it is not even necessarily a sexual thing (their heavy focus on what seems to us like sexual practices notwithstanding!). Some D/s authorities state categorically that the submissive partner *must* submit—that it is her *duty* to

submit, and that if she doesn't, she is not truly submissive. They bandy about terms like “faux-sub” and “fake sub”. Some D/s authorities also regard dominance as a great burden that the dominant partner must bear. It all sounds decidedly unpleasant. Teeth-gritting, dutiful self-sacrifice and burden-shouldering is not Taken In Hand.

One defining characteristic of a Taken In Hand relationship that some (though by no means all) D/s folk reject is the idea that the husband in charge puts his wife and the relationship first. We take the view that putting her and the relationship first is the key to creating a marriage in which the man is in control in a good, healthy and sustainable way.

Several D/s individuals have criticised this Taken In Hand position as advocating coddling women. Indeed, many in the D/s world take the view that D/s is nothing to do with love, and that if anything, love complicates D/s or makes it less pure. For Taken In Hand folk on the other hand, love is important, and Taken In Hand folk welcome a bit of (so-called) coddling (both ways) because when spouses are kind to each other that goes a long way towards creating a happy marriage.

Taken In Hand stresses that the relationship is for the benefit of both spouses, not just the woman (as in some DD relationships) and not just the dominant individual (as in some D/s relationships). To be fair, many in the BDSM/D/s/M/s world thoroughly agree that a relationship should not be all about either party. But there is a lot of narcissism going unquestioned. The husband in a

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Taken In Hand relationship is a bit like a master of the art of Brazilian jiu-jitsu: he submits his partner *gently*, trying not to harm the person he is submitting.

Another reason some Taken In Hand folk don't identify with the D/s label is that D/s implies dominance and submission, and from a Taken In Hand perspective the D/s idea of what properly constitutes dominance and submission is so narrow as to exclude Taken In Hand. According to many D/s folk, the essence of submissiveness is feeling a deep need or even compulsion to *serve*. Others say that the defining characteristic of submissiveness is the desire to obey no matter what. Whilst Taken In Hand wives very much respect, honour and appreciate their husbands and strive to please them, many cannot claim to be submissive in that D/s sense, because they lack the deep need to serve and obey that so many believe is the essence of submissiveness.

In the D/s world, one of the most common ideas of what constitutes dominance leaves Taken In Hand folk scratching their heads. For Taken In Hand inclined men who think of themselves as dominant (and many do not particularly think of themselves as dominant), being dominant means enjoying *dominating*. The men in Taken In Hand relationships relish *submitting* their wife.

By contrast, for many in the D/s world, being dominant is nothing to do with *dominating* and *submitting*, and indeed, they state very forcefully that they would never countenance doing that. They prefer to be served and obeyed rather than *domi-*

nating and *submitting* their woman. While to a Taken In Hand person, *dominating* and *submitting* implies strength and is highly erotic for both husband and wife, some D/s folk see it as weak.

I am sure such D/s folk don't see it like this, but from a Taken In Hand perspective this is a bit like a mixed martial artist expecting the person he is facing in the cage to submit without him actually doing anything to submit him. Men in Taken In Hand relationships are more like those who make it in the MMA world: they positively relish dominating and submitting their partner, and they do not in any way regard it disrespectful of their partner not to submit without them doing anything to bring that about.

Try asking MMA fans who is the weaker—the one who enjoys dominating and submitting a worthy partner, or the one who prefers partners who submit without him having to do anything to submit them. The alpha male in the animal kingdom doesn't get to be the alpha male by expecting others to submit without any action on his part.

Another slight difference is that the D/s world stress on strict protocols, large numbers of bizarre rules and hardcore punishments, correct form, and elaborate rituals, and their penchant for humiliation and degradation, tends to leave many Taken In Hand folk cold.

Another difference is that Taken In Hand couples tend to regard their Taken In Hand relationship as being a very private matter, whereas D/s/BDSM/M/s folk tend to be very open and public. We ask post-

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ers not to let it all hang out in their posts on this site, and we also ask posters not to post sex posts. It is not that we disapprove of such posts; they are just not what we want for this site. Many Taken In Hand folk find D/s/BDSM/M/s folk tend to be far too exhibitionistic for their taste. To many D/s/BDSM/M/s folk Taken In Hand folk are far too private and prudish.

Moreover, it is not just a matter of being private. Many Taken In Hand folk are repulsed and nauseated by D/s/BDSM exhibitionistic sex posts. They really don't find them erotic. Again, this is just a matter of having different preferences, not a moral judgement on D/s sex posts.

Many Taken In Hand folk dislike the idea of any label whatsoever, not wanting to accept any standard role, and not wanting to be put in a stereotypical box. A Taken In Hand relationship is not stereotypical but evolves in its own unique way. Some find that the more they think of themselves as being this or that label, the more they tend to fall into a boring stereotype instead of interacting as the individuals they are.

The D/s, BDSM etc communities make a point of being inclusive and make no assumptions about which person of which sex is doing what with whom. Taken In Hand is specifically about consensually male-controlled sexually-exclusive marriages, simply because that is *my preference* as the owner of the site. The mere fact that this is my preference in no way means I think everyone else should share my preference! (Have I said that enough times to get 500

through yet?!) I positively love the fact that many who read and enjoy this site have different preferences from mine. You might be surprised by how many gay, lesbian and female-dominated couples read the site.

Finally, there is no getting around the simple fact that to be willing to associate yourself with a given label or idea, that label or idea has to appeal to you. Since D/s, BDSM, M/s etc tend to leave Taken In Hand folk cold, that suggests that there is a difference between Taken In Hand and these other things. A Taken In Hand woman is more likely to be put off or repulsed by a prospective partner approaching her in the sort of manner D/s men seem to adopt, whereas, presumably, a woman into D/s would find it thrilling.

Similarly, a Taken In Hand inclined man prefers a woman whom he can enjoy dominating and submitting, and thereby bending to his will through his own action. Just as a mixed martial artist would not want to be in the cage with someone who submitted without any action on his part, men with Taken In Hand inclinations would not want to be with someone who is already in hand and thoroughly submissive. Hence the name "Taken In Hand" as opposed to "Already In Hand."*

* (And to answer the gentleman who has recently challenged me (three times) to answer this question, and accused me of being hung up on labels, it is surely not I who am hung up on labels, but those who keep insisting that I adopt their preferred label! I personally hope

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Having said all this, may I stress (please hear me!) that I am not saying that no D/s (or indeed M/s, etc) relationships are Taken In Hand, and nor am I criticising D/s, I am merely answering the question I have been asked several times recently, namely, why do Taken In Hand folk reject the "D/s" label? What is the difference between Taken In Hand and D/s?³⁵⁵

"GROWING OLD COLOURFULLY" (5 NOVEMBER 2007)

I dyed my hair again on Sunday, and my husband had occasion to speak to me sternly about the fact that he had found some spots of dye on the bathroom walls which needed clearing up (I had meant to do it but forgot since I have "the attention span of a goldfish" as he frequently remarks). This made me sulky, which led to the inevitable consequences.

Later, when we were lying in bed, he remarked that he didn't understand why I had to dye my hair anyway. "But don't you think it looks beautiful?" I asked him, since I always spend some time admiring myself in the mirror after I have

died it. "Yes," he said. "But I think it looks beautiful if you don't dye it too. Look at my hair" he went on. "I don't dye it, and what's wrong with it?" "Nothing," I said, and forbore to add anything else, but "I know, you were going to add 'what's left of it', weren't you?" he asked me sternly, giving me a hard slap on the thigh.

"What's wrong with growing old gracefully?" he asked me.

I don't know.³⁵⁶

"HOW TO MAKE YOUR MARRIAGE GOOD WHEN LIFE IS BAD" (7 NOVEMBER 2007)

My husband and I are under a lot of stress right now. My husband's sister (with whom he is very close) is dying, our son wants to drop out of school, our business is failing, we have so many debts it will take a lifetime to pay them off, and we're working 7 days/week just to keep our heads above water.

To say we're under a lot of stress would be an understatement.

And sometimes the stress gets the better of us and we fight or withdraw or otherwise disconnect. But more often than not, that's not what happens. We each want to support and love the other, and we both know that every moment we spend alone together is precious, and we make the most of it.

When we first got married we would not have had a strong enough marriage to weather the current storms, but now things are different. When we have time together, whether a few hours one evening or a half an hour lunch break (which we don't usually take, but maybe

no one ever wants to discuss labels ever again!)

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **I am a man looking for the one. Why do many Taken In Hand folk reject the D/s label? What is the difference between Taken In Hand and D/s (or BDSM, M/s, etc.)?**]

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once or twice a week we stop work and eat lunch together) we try to make it special.

In times of stress, it's even more important than usual to do things for each other that make life sweet, and for us it is even more important than at other times for us to express the Taken In Hand nature of our relationship. My husband is always in control, but sometimes the control is obvious while other times it's more in the background. Now that we have so many stressors in our life, my husband is being more directly and obviously in control, physically taking me in hand a lot, telling me what to do more, and doing more that could be described as play control too. Having fun and laughing are as important as connecting and relaxing at times when life's throwing a lot at you. I try to help my husband relax when we get a break, because I'm more able to relax than he is, and he bears the weight of responsibility for our livelihood. I do all I can to ensure that he feels appreciated, worshipped and respected. For him, feeling respected and appreciated are very important.

Most of what we do to make our moments together sweet costs nothing financially because we don't have money to spend on dinners out, movies, etc. We've found that the best things in life really are free. We go for a walk and appreciate the sunrise before work. We play in the kids' playground when all the kids are gone, pushing each other on the swings. We give each other a back rub or a foot bath or a shoulder massage. We tickle each other until he

wrestles me to the ground and takes me, pinning my wrists above my head. We go to the store together and make a date of it, giggling and playing and sometimes buying a special treat like a 67c box of candy. We watch TV together and talk. We read books to each other and talk. We surprise each other. We turn the mundane into an adventure or find a way to laugh together.

I try to do yoga every day, as it distresses me like nothing else. A couple days ago I was doing my yoga and my husband commanded me to strip naked and do it naked in front of him. I did, and boy did we have a good night! My husband has now ordered me to do yoga daily, which excites me even though I do try to do it daily anyway.

My husband and I saw a TV show reporting about a Saudi Arabian Islamic "Dr. Phil" telling husbands how to beat their wives ("the beatings must be light and must not make her face ugly. He must beat her where it will not leave marks.") and my husband started teasing me about my being a woman and remarked that I need a beating, and commanded me to fetch his belt. I slept particularly well last night. :)

Tonight we're going out on a date night. My husband insisted I take the afternoon off to pamper myself and take the time I like to take (for ever, he says) to get ready. What are we doing for this grand date? We're going window-shopping in the local mall! I don't know exactly what will happen but I can guarantee that we'll be enjoying ourselves a lot more than most couples out for an expensive dinner and a movie. Be-

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cause we know how precious our time together is, and (most of the time!) we choose to make the most of what we have, instead of feeling miserable and stressed by what we don't have.³⁵⁷

"A GOOD MARRIAGE IS A THREESOME" (9 NOVEMBER 2007)

Despite popular notions to the contrary, marriage is a threesome. While most people understand the *he* and *she*, they tend to forget that the marriage takes on a life of its own.

One of my basic premises in Taken In Hand is that the husband should do that which is best for the wife as well as the marriage. Otherwise, it is too easy for the whole thing to become a boyfriend-girlfriend relationship in which there is a *he* and a *she* but no *us*.

To become *one* is both deceptively simple and incredibly difficult because it requires thinking in a third and intangible dimension. It requires seeing possibilities that are not always obvious from the outside.³⁵⁸

"ARE TAKEN IN HAND WIVES SUFFERING FROM STOCKHOLM SYNDROME?" (13 NOVEMBER 2007)

Are Taken In Hand wives suffering from Stockholm syndrome?

Stockholm syndrome refers to a kind of traumatic bonding in which a captive or victim of abuse develops positive feelings for, and identifies with, his or her captor or abuser. Battered wives are thought to exhibit

Stockholm syndrome when they defend their abusive husbands.

Are the husbands in Taken In Hand relationships anything like those of battered wives? Are they like hostage takers? Is that why their wives love them so much?

No of course not.

In a Taken In Hand marriage, the husband *puts his wife and their relationship first*. How is that abusive? Far from being a victim in a traumatic situation, these wives feel like the luckiest women on the planet. The idea that this has anything in common with Stockholm syndrome or traumatic bonding or abuse of any kind is completely absurd.

There *are* marriages in which the husband is in control, and the wife is in a Stockholm syndrome like state, but of all such relationships Taken In Hand ones are the very least likely to cause Stockholm syndrome. You are more likely to find it in the muslim world and in other authoritarian cultures in which the value of individual female life is very low.

In the case of Stockholm syndrome, the victim does not *seek* captivity or abuse; the Stockholm syndrome is a victim's *response* to the trauma of that abuse or captivity. By contrast, you only have to read this website to see that there are thousands of women actively seeking a Taken In Hand relationship. They are not looking to be traumatised and victimised, they find the idea thrilling and fun.

Some victims of childhood abuse do seek relationships in later life that have some similarity to that they had with their abuser, and in some cases there is an unhealthy reliving

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of the abuse without any resolution or healing from the abuse, but that clearly is nothing to do with a Taken In Hand relationship.* If anything, a Taken In Hand relationship is more likely to help abuse victims move beyond their past abuse and into a more healthy present and future, because the husband is a Taken In Hand relationship is precisely *not* abusive, and they can feel safe with their husband as well as getting the intensity that they may find lacking in an equal roommate-like relationship.³⁵⁹

"WHEN A MAN TAKES CHARGE, HIS WIFE NO LONGER REJECTS HIM SEXUALLY" (19 NOVEMBER 2007)

My husband and I have been making a great many changes in our 20-year relationship over the past couple of months, and sexual availability is one of them. I thought I'd report in.

I have to say that so far it's been nothing but positive. I'm so glad to be free of the endless worry over who is trying to say what, and what it means. Where "are you tired?" is a secret message and I have to be careful to correctly decipher its meaning. Is he testing the waters for sex? Do I look drawn and he's just noting it? Is he tired, and wanting to commiser-

ate together? Because if he *was* checking for interest in sex, and I responded that yes, I'm tired, then suddenly we have another big rejection hanging between us, even if I might have been fine with having it.

Too, I tend to overanalyze everything. So if asked (in whatever manner, verbal or physical) if I want to, I have to go through this huge thought process. Do I? Am I tired? Too full from dinner? What time is it, do I have to get up early in the morning?

Now I don't worry whether he's working up to it and what time is it, or worry if we're going to do it we should get started or we'll be tired tomorrow. If he wants it, he wants it, and he'll say "come here." I don't have to think or worry. It's very relaxing. And let's face it, it doesn't take years to get the thing done. If it's late, he typically isn't wanting something extended. Short and sweet. And I always feel happy and loved and secure and drowsy afterwards. Nice.

One thing I notice, and that delights me no end, is that he's always touching me now. When we're out he's holding my belt loop or stroking my back, at home he's smacking my butt as he passes or pulling me into a big kiss. He's obviously got a feeling of ownership that he hadn't before. *His* wife. I love that, it simply melts me. And it arouses me. I find that it takes him about 10 seconds to get me fully engaged now, and none of that time is spent discussing or worrying whether I'm tired or whatever, or making passive verbal approaches (because he was trying to

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **Are Taken In Hand wives suffering from Stockholm syndrome?**]

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be sensitive, and also feared rejection).

As for turning him down because I'm ill or simply too fatigued or crampy and bloaty, it's not an issue so far. I talk pretty much nonstop, and like to report such things as nasty papercuts and slight fevers. So if I've got the slightest thing wrong with me, he knows. He doesn't seek it at those times. I suppose it's possible that the power will go to his head eventually and he'll start demanding it even when I've reported being near to needing hospitalization over a runny nose, but for now it's terrific. I feel more wanted and more adored than ever before. Really, I worry myself. I'm all sweet sighing contentment lately. It's not like me. I'm not even sure it's safe!³⁶⁰

"MY HUSBAND IS MY MASTER BUT I AM NO SLAVE" (17 DECEMBER 2007)

My husband is my master but I am no slave.

What is a master?

A male teacher.

One having authority over another.

One that conquers.

The male head of a household.

What does it mean to master something?

To overcome (as in, he mastered his fears).

To become skilled or proficient in the use of.

To gain a thorough understanding of.

What is a slave?

A person that is owned by another as a piece of property.

A person held in servitude as the chattel of another.

One that is completely subservient to a dominating influence.

Synonyms: subservient, captive, toiler, workhorse, peon, serf, etc.

Many of us here on Taken In Hand squirm at the thought of being labeled anything. We have recently been presented articles about why Taken In Hand is not BDSM or D/s or any of those other more commonly understood labels. Some people have put forth the question, "Why does it matter what we are labeled?"

I believe words can have power and deep meaning. Anybody who has ever been in love knows that certain phrases are special and meaningful between partners. In and of themselves, the words may not mean much, but to the lovers who understand them they may mean everything.

Before my husband and I met, I read through many BDSM and D/s websites and books. There was something I found in those pages that deeply appealed to me, yet at the same time, they left me feeling as if they went too far (for my tastes) in some areas and not far enough in others.

I had a deep desire to be owned, to be possessed. I wanted to belong to my spouse. I wanted him to want to own me and know that I am his and his alone. I wanted him to know me in a way that nobody else ever could or would. I wanted him to master me; to "gain a thorough understanding" of me. I wanted him to be my master; to teach me, conquer me and have authority over me.

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But in all my searching through that kind of literature, I never had the desire to be a slave. I saw definitions like the ones above and they made me cringe. Did I want to be a piece of property that could be easily discarded? Did I want to be completely submissive, obedient and mindless? Did I want to be a "subservient, captive, toiler, workhorse, peon, serf" or the like? A clear and resounding NO.

In this context, having a person who could master me meant a lot of conditions had to be in place for it to work. This person could not just be a casual relationship. I don't believe that you can truly "master" someone unless you know them well. That means commitment, love, trust, respect, loyalty, time and effort. To me, it meant marriage. I scratched my head when I read story upon story of people rushing to be "mastered" by people they barely knew. To me, it seemed like only an illusion. Consequently, I also read story upon story of people who had been "mastered" by one person only to have it not work out. Then, they moved on to the next "master."

How can you give yourself away, I mean really give yourself to someone—repeatedly? In my case, I would find it impossible.

Since I felt so strongly about these things, I figured I would never feel comfortable really calling anyone my master, even though something within me cried out for it. If I had a master, wouldn't that make me a slave?

Now I am married to a man who is the leader in our home. He is a respectful, kind, loving, enthusiastic

and strong man. Our relationship did not always have a Taken In Hand dynamic; it has evolved from just tiny seeds planted during our dating relationship and early marriage. We found Taken In Hand and the picture became much clearer—we knew that this was what we wanted for our relationship.

More time passed and I found myself again thinking about having a master, a desire I had suppressed my whole adult life. I thought about why I desired it. My husband was already in practice what some would consider my master. Why was it that the word itself held so much power for me? I searched myself for all sorts of theories as to why I might have this desire and what my motives were. Was I secretly harboring some desire to be degraded—a slave? Was there something wrong with me?

After much soul-searching I discovered that no, I was still a very independent and decidedly fierce woman. I did not consider myself to be a slave by any stretch of the imagination. To me a slave was a degrading term, meaning that my husband only owned me, but did not cherish me. He would not have to invest in a slave because the only thing that matters in that dynamic (in my humble opinion) is what the master desires. My husband is not the type of man to only consider his own desires and feelings. Like many Take In Hand men, he adores and spoils me.

I found that I did not even consider myself to be my husband's "submissive." I, like many other Taken In Hand women, desire to be brought

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to submission by a man who is actually more powerful than me. I desire the power differential to be genuine.

Still, I found the word creeping up in my throat, begging to roll off my lips. I did more research into the word "master" and its definitions. I found that the word master is actually very appropriate to describe what my husband is to me. He is my teacher, he has authority over me, conquers me and is the head of our household. He has invested time into getting to know me—mastering me. This is a process which I have no doubt will continue throughout our life together.

When I expressed my desire to use this word in our relationship, my husband carefully considered it. We talked at length about it and my husband also explored some definitions of the word. We also looked at antonyms to the word master. One surprising antonym came up: "woman."

Since our early relationship, my husband has called me that. If he was irritated with me (even in jest), he would exclaim, "woman!" This was quite effective in curbing the undesired behavior. This was something he did naturally, long before we discovered our desire for the dynamic we have. After my husband did his own research, he decided that he desired to be my master. He felt, as I did, that I could not be (nor did either of us want me to be) his slave. He decided I was his woman.

I am many other things to him. I am his lover, wife, friend, mother to his children. But I am also his woman.

Since the day my husband became my master, we use the term in many ways. He will have me use it to make a point about who is in charge, something that I find extremely sexy and powerful. Sometimes, though, the word has an intimate and affectionate meaning. Every night now before we go to sleep, my husband says to me, "Now I want you to go to sleep." He waits for me to respond, "Yes, Master." Afterwards, I feel peaceful and dreamy. I know who I belong to and who wants me. I am reminded that he is in charge and will protect and nurture our relationship.

Finally, after all the time waiting and searching (then doubting and second-guessing my own desires) I have my master.³⁶¹

"WHY WON'T HE SPANK ME WHEN HE'S ANGRY?" (2 JANUARY 2008)

Why won't he spank me when he's angry?

Why won't your husband spank you when he is angry or annoyed? Well, there could be a lot of reasons, but one of the most basic may be the fact that men have to overcome a lifetime of conditioning that tells us that it is wrong to hit our wives in anger.

Our dads told most of us that hitting girls/women is wrong—not just wrong under certain circumstances, wrong, wrong, wrong.

So, for a man to spank you erotically (as foreplay), he probably had to put aside a deeply held moral conviction. That's not an easy thing to do.

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And that's only the first layer of wrongness.

The second layer comes when a wife asks her husband to go beyond erotic spanking and *discipline* her. Now, he is being asked to hit his wife when she does something wrong. When she somehow "needs" it or has "earned" a spanking. This not only goes against the "hitting women" rule, it turns him into something that most of us call a wife-beater.

If he's old enough to remember The Honeymooners or other television/movies of the nineteen-fifties, he probably associates wife-spanking with the kind of loathsome creature who thinks he's "better" than a woman. Those are the men of his grandfather's generation who hit their wives "because they deserved it" or "because she asked for it".

Those men were despicable bastards—neanderthals that we are ashamed to have in our ancestry.

In today's world, those are the kinds of men that other men take out behind the barn (or behind the tavern) and teach a lesson to. (The lesson being: You don't hit women and you most certainly don't hit your wife).

Those of us who post here have come to understand that there is a difference between wife beating and disciplinary spanking. But that understanding often comes as a result of a *long hard* look in the mirror and a deep re-thinking of our understanding of women.

It isn't easy to get to the point of disciplining a woman.

Furthermore, even if your husband is somehow able to get past both of

those "don't ever do this" rules that are deeply ingrained into his conscience, you are now asking him to take a third step: to spank you in anger.

This request is reminiscent of Alice in Wonderland ("... believe three impossible things before breakfast").

Not only is he supposed to hit a woman—and punish his wife as if she were a child—now he's supposed to do it when he's angry.

To understand why this is even more difficult, let's consider another basic thing about men: Men learn how to control their anger. That's one of the things that differentiates men from boys and from animals. If you can't control your anger, you aren't a man. But, for some of us, it's not that easy.

Male anger is a strong thing—a very difficult thing to control. For some of us, the best we can do is to shut down or withdraw when we are angry. It isn't the best level of control, but for some of us, it's all we have.

Asking a man to spank you at a time when he is angry requires him to *engage* his anger, rather than shut it down. You are asking him to wrestle with it and somehow maintain control of himself at the same time...

... while he is hitting you, and violating the other two most basic rules of life as a man.

And what if he fails? What happens if he releases his anger on you and spansks you—allowing himself to inflict his anger on your body—and he is unable to rein it in?

What happens when you scream at him to stop in the middle of his fury

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when he is hitting you too hard—when you suddenly realize that his anger is more than you can stand?

What happens, is that he loses you. You go screaming home to your mother, file for divorce, have him arrested for beating you, and he ends up in jail—or at least that's what he fears will happen. Note that he isn't really afraid of *you* (nor your mother). He's afraid of the power of *his own anger*.

I presume you are asking him to spank you with *some* of his anger, not *all* of it. I presume that you want him to have control while he is doing it, rather than just letting go and giving you everything he has. Sure, that's possible, but it ain't easy—especially for someone who has never done it before.

It isn't something that most of us practice doing. We aren't supposed to hit people when we're angry—and we aren't supposed to hit women at all. So hitting a woman with *some* of our anger—and keeping it under control—Good Grief! Nobody told us that we had to learn how to do that! (There are exceptions: boxers, soldiers, police officers etc.)

How do you get your husband past all of this? Here's one suggestion: talk to him at a time when he isn't angry and discuss something that is kind of a pet peeve of his. Tell him that you know that your behavior in some area annoys him and that you would like to use it as a test case.

Tell him you want him to spank you the next time you make him *mildly annoyed*.

Since it will be a pet peeve and not a major issue, it should allow him to wrestle with anger on a small scale (otherwise referred to as “annoyance”). If you frequently burn the toast at breakfast, that's probably a good choice. It's annoying. It's worth a good spanking and a lecture about paying attention, but it isn't something that most of us get furious about.

If he is willing to try out his anger on you over a small annoyance, it will give him a taste of what it can be like to spank you when he is truly angry over something more important—and it will give *you* an idea of what to expect if he does choose to express real anger in a spanking.

I was surprised when my wife told me that she wanted to feel my anger. I told her that she didn't know what she was asking for. But she wanted it. She insisted.

And I gave it to her.

But she made it easier for me: she was asking me to *scold* her, to yell at her, *not* to spank her. Even so, I hurt her badly (emotionally) and sent her crying into another room. (Trust me, when I scold, I do a damned good job of it).

She came back in, five minutes later, and hugged me and thanked me. I'm not so sure that would have been the result if I had *spanked* her in anger.

If you really want your husband to spank you in anger, please make sure you understand what you are asking for, and please figure out some way of doing it in small stages.

Men's anger was designed to be lethal. It was designed for killing—for those times when a bear is attacking

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you or when a gang of rapists is after you—for those moments in history when the really bad guys invaded our homeland, intent on destroying us. We modern men don't face those situations much anymore. We don't get a lot of practice in *legitimate* uses of anger.

Asking us to use our anger on you with the kind of delicate finesse that you require (i.e. a spanking, not a *beating*) is asking an awful lot.

Remember that you are asking your man to do something that (hopefully) his father told him he was *never* supposed to even think about doing.

When my wife and I moved to actual spanking in real anger, we found a way of handling it. But it took us years to get there.

Why won't your husband spank you in anger? Quite possibly because he has a long path ahead of him to reach a point where he can do it without losing his soul in the process.

Oh, by the way, it took me 18 years to begin to understand that my wife wanted me to use my anger on her.* It took an additional six or seven years to get to the point of spanking her (physically) in anger.³⁶²

"WHITE-HOT ABSOLUTION" (5 JANUARY 2008)

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **Why won't he spank me when he's angry?**]

I found Taken In Hand during a Google search (I don't even remember exactly what I was looking for) and was intrigued that there were so many others who had an appreciation for loving, responsible, male-led relationships. My wife Tricia and I have been married for a little over three years, though we have been best friends for nearly thirteen (be sure and marry your best friend, guys!) Without getting into too much detail (or going on like a romance novel), I'll just say we are truly soul mates with only the greatest respect for each other.

On top of that, I am in control of our household, and have the final say regarding virtually all matters. From a 21st Century 'social' perspective, the two would seem incompatible. Yet, I think those who post to this website understand how mutual respect can still exist within a Taken In Hand relationship. Tricia prides herself on saying she 'knows her place' in our marriage, and I am eager to make 'her place' somewhere that she can flourish and be free from the responsibilities that weighed her down for the first forty-plus years of her life. I am honored to be the one to which she defers. She is an extraordinarily beautiful woman, and very intelligent. And yet, she lovingly gives it all to me.

That being said, we are also complementary personality types. When it comes to matters literary and logical, we share the same brain. When it comes to expression and reaction, we can be near-opposites. I tend to be the even-keeled analyzer, whereas Tricia is the emotionally driven quick-responder. For many years

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she had issues with anger and self-image, fueled partly (if not largely) by repeated abuse at a very young age. Because of the trust we were able to build during our ten-year friendship before marriage, she slowly, gradually allowed herself to relinquish control of many of the things that burdened her. The realization that solving the world's problems was no longer on her 'to-do' list for each day, allowed a certain amount of release, and my lovely wife was somewhat more at peace.

Throughout all this, I had been occasionally reading *Taken In Hand* posts, looking mostly for those that discussed the attitude of the responsible husband. Of course, many of the posts dealt with spanking, and I read some of them with interest, though never associating them with my own circumstances. When I showed Tricia the site, she read many posts as well, and we both felt somewhat validated that there were others out there who shared our vision for a relationship. But the spanking was just an 'extra' feature that neither of us took very seriously. After all, she tried so very hard to make me happy and to follow my guidance, so how could I think about spanking her? I'm also not the type to make a nit-picking list of minor infractions that will eventually "add up" to a spanking. Because of my temperament, those little things seem to fade away very quickly. It was when I read a post stating that "sometimes the relationship needs a spanking" (or words to that effect) that I first said "hmm..." and began to entertain the thought. The biological information out there

regarding the release of various hormones from spanking was also intriguing, and I talked about it with Tricia. We both thought it was interesting, but again, there wasn't any driving compulsion to add it to our relationship.

So, I'm not exactly sure how or why it happened the first time, but the experience was revelatory! Our sex life has been white-hot from day one (it's the first area where Tricia gave up control to me), but in the midst of lovemaking one evening, we were both surprised to find her over my lap, receiving the first spanking of her lifetime. Apparently, the 'minor infractions' that I thought had faded, did in fact accumulate; but it was mostly Tricia who had tucked them away! With each swat she cried out, and when asked if it was too hard, replied with a firm "No!" After the spanking (and its erotic result) was over, we were both a bit cautious in our analysis of what had just happened. Finally, my wife was able to articulate a single, very telling thought about the event: "This is going to sound silly, but I feel like I've been absolved of my sins!"

That was a few months ago, and we have since realized the importance of physical control in our particular "male-led relationship". It is as if the floodgates have opened; Tricia says she has never experienced a greater or more satisfying release in her life. But this has also been a tremendous realization for me. For years (even before we married) I was aware of the great power of Tricia's femininity, and the great gift of her welcoming my control. I

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don't exaggerate one bit when I say that men want her; she is one of those girls that just "has it". Yet she unhesitatingly gives all of her delightful self to me, and I often wondered how I could give back anything equal to her gracious displays of love and obedience. A few nights ago, she asked me what was "in it" for me when I spanked her. The benefits to her are obvious: she feels relaxed, docile, and free from anger, worry and self-doubt after a good spanking. But I'm not the type who would enjoy spanking a woman just for its own sake; so where was my reward? This was when we finally clarified everything: I love spanking Tricia precisely because of what it does for her. I now see the flip side of the coin: my masculinity is also a very powerful thing, and my control is a great gift. And the gift of spanking has become an important part of that control. The astounding intimacies my true love and I now share have given her the ability to finally trust another person completely. And for the first time, I see her becoming comfortable with the idea of trusting herself.³⁶³

"READY AND WILLING" (6 JANUARY 2008)

He and I have moved to a higher realm in our relationship. I am ready to stop questioning and wondering, in exchange for "doing". To please him not because I think it's good for the relationship (it is, of course) but because it is truly how I feel in my heart. The gentle, loving, caring sides of my spirit have won over the

"I am strong, I am woman, I am going to resist you" side.

These feelings of new acceptance have been growing for some time. This is not novel thinking. I realize it's real, though likely there will be plenty of times when I will be tempted to display my female roar.

But, oh, I will need to stop in time to realize who I will be roaring to. And, understand it really has no place. It is an action not necessary to engage in with him. And of course, he is more dominant and will quickly and respectfully remind me. With love.

I am so happily in love!

I have been more candid. For example, I expressed recently that I want him to *take me* when he feels the desire. And I will be aware of his needs. He thought those were great, intimate words and appreciated knowing this is what I want. Yes I do want this, for him, for me, for us.

In this new year, I am looking forward to continuing to grow and to loving him in the sweet ways he deserves, without resistance. It won't be always easy, but I am ready.³⁶⁴

"THE FINAL STEP" (20 JANUARY 2008)

I finally did it.

My first post* on this site was almost four years ago. At the time, I asked the central question for my Taken in Hand relationship with my wife: "How can I be sure that she

* "How can I be sure that she wants to be taken in hand?" 6 April 2004.

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wants to be taken in hand in light of the fact that she won't say it?".

Well, the answer to that question is that I could only know by taking small steps over a long period, and verifying at each step that our relationship was still strong (not by asking her directly, but by watching and listening in general).

Others may find it easy to move more swiftly, but I did not. And in our case, time is relative. We had been married for twenty-two (now twenty-six) years, so taking four years to do things right wasn't all that unreasonable.

All along the way, she kept saying "no". She continually resisted—and yet, she told me at some point after each step that she loved me, that I had done the right thing.

And she complained louder when I *didn't*.

For her, the point was that I not take "no" for an answer—that I lead without her telling me what to do.

Today (Thursday) was a milestone for us. For the first time, I punished her with a hard spanking, beyond her breaking point.

Before today, I had lightly spanked her many times as a playful thing. I had also spanked her several times to the point of her saying "no".

I had even spanked her in anger occasionally ("occasionally" meaning, twice in four years).

What I had *not* done, before today, was to spank her to the point of breaking her—to the point of submission—to the point of obedience. I had also never spanked her in order to gain her compliance with something that she did not want to do.

Most of the time over the past four years, she has obeyed me when I have told her to do something that she didn't want to do. And on the few occasions when she steadfastly refused, I acquiesced. I previously wasn't ready to compel her, if compelling her required me to spank her.

Today, I was ready. My discussions with you on this site were a big part of the reason. In addition, I had taken all of those small steps over time, and she had confirmed to me that she loved me and that I was doing what she *needed*—even if she could not admit that she wanted it.

The other thing—the tipping point that made it possible for me to take the last step—was that I *needed* her to do something for me. I've been going through a rough time in my career lately and I need her unqualified emotional support. Right now, I need her to give me more than she is usually willing to give.

This morning, when I told her what I needed (no, not what you might expect, something else) she stalled. She distracted me. She said "It's 6am, I can't do that right now." Of course, she's been saying the same thing at all times of the day, and I reminded her of that.

We argued. Eventually, she said, "What really bugs me is that you argue with me and take so long at it. If you would just get it over with, I could deal with it!" And yet, she still refused.

What I needed from her was something that I could not "force" on her. I needed her active participation. Normally, I would scold her, she would cry, we would make up, and

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then she would comply. But this time, I took the final step.

I ordered her to turn over, face down. She did, without resistance. That surprised me, since she clearly knew what I was about to do.

I told her to give me her opposite hand under the pillow above her head. She did, hesitating only a moment. I held it firm.

I spanked her, hard, with my bare hand on her bare skin.

For a while, she took it, probably thinking (hoping) that it would be over quickly.

After a while, she squirmed and resisted. I restrained her with my body and continued to spank as hard as I could.

When I didn't yet have her compliance, I moved down to her legs and spanked them too.

She cried out. She used our old "safe word". I kept going.

A few spanks later, she bucked and twisted and yelled, "That's enough! I can't take anymore! I can't take this right now!"

I kept going.

She broke down and cried and resisted as hard as she could.

I kept going.

She went past "that point" and lost all emotional control, bawling like a little girl.

I kept going, a bit more, to punish her for her resistance and disobedience. I made sure that it hurt more than enough, more than just a "fair trade". I made sure that she knew that the spanking would end only when I decided to end it.

Then I stopped.

She turned away from me. I put my arms around her, holding her.

She didn't try to leave. In fact, she snuggled into me.

After less than a minute of intense crying, she calmed down a little and I told her to turn back to me, which she did. I asked her, "Do you love me?"

She said, "Of course I do."

I asked, "Do you forgive me?"

She said, "I will after a while."

I pressed, "Do you forgive me right now?"

The last little bit of resistance passed from her. She smiled and begrudgingly admitted that she didn't need to forgive me, that I had done the right thing, that she felt good about it.

She cried for a while longer and then gave me what I needed, fully and without reservation. I then told her to call in sick and spend the day with me, which she did.

We made love. The whole time, I made her express how she felt about being taken in hand (not with those words, she does not know about this website). I reminded her that I am stronger—both physically and emotionally—than she is. In short, I "rubbed it in". That seemed to excite her more than anything else.

I pleased her until she embarrassed herself, screaming the way she absolutely hates to scream—and I took pleasure in doing it to her. I also took my usual pleasure from taking her.

Afterward, I told her that I now, finally, understand.

From now on, I think I will be able to spank her when she needs to be spanked. I'll see to it that she occasionally regrets ever "asking" me to Take her in Hand, but I know full

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well that those regrets will be fleeting.

As I told her just before I came downstairs to write this, things are going to be different from now on.

I still do not accept that a husband has a right to do this to his wife. But I do accept that it is what she wants and needs. And I am beginning to accept that I really am allowed to enjoy it.

There is no greater pleasure in this world than what I experienced this morning.

Thank you—all of you—for helping me find my way to this wonderful place.³⁶⁵

"CIRCUMVENTING CONSENT IN A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP" (23 JANUARY 2008)

When we talk about consent, I think most of us would like to have some kind of a baseline, a mandatory level of consent that *must* be there in order to proceed. I know I would sure like to have that.

But there are some women who don't want to consent—who don't want to give permission—who, in fact, want to say "no" and mean it and have it done to them anyway, despite the fact that they hate it.

My wife, Elle, is one of them.

Elle and I found a way around the issue of consent. We found a path that allowed her to not have to give permission.

It's called forgiveness.

A while back, she looked at me with irritation in her eyes and exhaustion in her voice. She said to me, "*Please don't do this!* Just...

Just *please* don't do this!" She then turned away in disgust.

What I was doing that she hated so much was talking to her, trying to find out what I could do that she could agree to. The truth is that there was nothing she was going to agree to, because agreeing would ruin it.

So I asked her, "If I get it wrong, will you forgive me?" She turned back to me with a ray of hope in her eyes—mixed with a lot of irritation.

After a deep breath and some thought, she said, "I love you. I'm not going to leave you, *ever*. I'm not going to stop loving you, *ever*... Yes, I will forgive you. I may hate you for a while, I may get revenge, I may make you pay dearly for it, but I won't run home to mother... and I *will* forgive you... *eventually*."

"... BUT ONLY IF YOU SHUT UP ABOUT IT AND JUST DO IT!" Her face turned bright red with a combination of anger and embarrassment.

That was part of what allowed me to do what I did last week. While I was doing it, she hated it. She was mad. She wanted me to stop. She shouted at me and told me "no" in no uncertain terms—and she meant it.

Afterward, despite her threats of grudge-holding, she forgave me almost immediately. Her revenge and hatred have so far been avoided (although I did tell her that I might enjoy a little revenge).

She didn't tell me not to do it again.

In the five days since, she has given me many passionate hugs and kisses and has seductively bent over just about every piece of furniture in

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the house that is of the appropriate height.

I must not have gotten it wrong.

For the future, I still have nothing more than a promise of forgiveness—not a new one, just the same promise I had before.

No, there does not need to be consent. And *please* do not suggest that a promise to forgive is consent—at least, not within earshot of Elle. If she heard something like that, she would withdraw the promise.³⁶⁶

“REALITY IS IN THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER” (27 JANUARY 2008)

To some people, a Taken In Hand relationship is only real if the man asserts his authority over the woman against her will, and if he spanks her against her will, and if she fights him every step of the way. If she consents then it is not real and means the woman is really in charge.

I don't believe this. It would never have occurred to my husband to spank me for punishment if I had not suggested it (very tentatively) to him. The fact that he took to the idea with great enthusiasm surprised and (at first) somewhat disconcerted me, but I soon got used to it, and found that being spanked for punishment was ultimately much more satisfying (if more painful) than being spanked purely for pleasure.

The fact that I consent to him doing this does not mean, to me at any rate, that I am really in charge. He decides when, where, how often, how long, how hard etc, he is going to spank me, and I have no say in

any of that whatsoever. I don't know what would happen if I tried to call it off because I never have tried, and can't imagine doing so. But that still does not make it any less real to me.

If I was always fighting and struggling and protesting when my husband spanked me I think he would find it quite exhausting and stressful, and would probably get fed up with doing it. The idea of introducing punishment spanking into our relationship was to reduce stress between us rather than increasing it, which constant resistance on my part would probably do.

I always used to enjoy those films when the girl gets spanked by the infuriated hero against her will, I always used to imagine being that girl. But I always knew it would not really be against my will, because I would really want him to do it. I used to love the spanking scenes in *I Love Lucy* but I never confused them with reality, because *I Love Lucy* is clearly not a mirror of reality. And furthermore, *Lucy* is a terrible example of a Taken In Hand wife, because she never pays the slightest attention to anything Ricky says to her. She is always intent on getting her own way, and quite often does.

If my husband spanks me because he wants to (as he does) it is also because he knows I want him to as well. That he knows I take pleasure in him asserting his authority over me does not make it any less real, to me or to him. Reality is in the eye of the beholder. What is “real” is whatever makes a marriage work more smoothly, and if it is by the consent

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of both parties, then so much the better.³⁶⁷

"EXPLICIT CONSENT - FINALLY!" (31 JANUARY 2008)

Something very positive happened this past weekend. I've been holding off on writing about it until the discussions about consent ran their course. Well, that seems to have happened, so here is an update.

On Sunday, Elle said something out of the blue. It is actually typical of her communication style. I had come up behind her in the kitchen and wrapped my arms around her to give her a hug.

She purred and continued what she was doing. Then, after a moment, she said, "What you did last Thursday..." (She was referring to the events I discussed in this post).

"Mm?" I replied.

"You can do that anytime you want. I really liked it—not as it was happening obviously—but... it was nice." She turned around and held me tight.

Eventually, she whispered, "It's so much better. I can just be me. I can be a &*^%# if I feel like it, get spanked for it and not have to feel bad because you aren't mad at me."

There was another long pause as she gave me a back-rub from the front with the palms of her hands. "Just make me feel like that every once in a while," she said. "The past week and a half have been wonderful."

I think it was the first time she's said something about being taken in

hand without saying that it wasn't enough.

When we let go of the hug and she turned back to chopping whatever it was, she said, "Make me do something tonight. I want to feel it."

No, the words I've quoted above aren't the real words that she spoke, but what she actually said wouldn't have made sense to anyone other than me. Besides that, it was too personal to share in its literal form.

So, the whole point about consent (implicit/explicit or whatever) has become moot for us. I had to get us to where we are without the benefit of consent, but now that we're here, she's actually made it explicit.

This whole thing reminds me of Captain Kirk violating the prime directive—and then after he's saved the Federation, getting a message from Starfleet that he's authorized to violate the prime directive if necessary.

If he'd failed... well, the whole point is that he *had* to succeed.

Yes, I could have used a more highbrow metaphor, but Elle and I have been Star Trek fans together for twenty-eight years and it seems fitting.³⁶⁸

"CAN A TAKEN IN HAND WOMAN BE SEXUALLY SUBORDINATE AND SEXUALLY AGGRESSIVE?" (8 FEBRUARY 2008)

Dictionary.reference.com defines subordinate as such:

1. placed in or belonging to a lower order or rank.
2. of less importance; secondary.

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3. subject to or under the authority of a superior.
4. subservient or inferior.
5. subject; dependent.

In contrast, it defines aggressive as:

1. characterized by or tending toward unprovoked offensives, attacks, invasions, or the like; militantly forward or menacing: aggressive acts against a neighboring country.
2. making an all-out effort to win or succeed; competitive: an aggressive basketball player.
3. vigorously energetic, esp. in the use of initiative and forcefulness: an aggressive salesperson.
4. boldly assertive and forward; pushy: an aggressive driver.

At first glance, one would say she must be one or the other. However, I believe she can be both. While I am subject to my husband's authority, and dependent on him (his subordinate), I am also energetic, *very* competitive, and prone to unprovoked offensives (I'll initiate a wrestling match with my husband), in other words, aggressive.

While it's impossible to be both *simultaneously*, I'm often both during any given sexual encounter. As my husband, freshly showered, towel wrapped around his waist, innocently sorts through his dresser for his night clothes, I'll peer in from the doorway and ambush him. Caught off guard he'll fall prey to my attack, landing flat on his back on our bed with me pinning him down. We'll struggle back and forth, rolling and twisting until ultimately he regains power and I'm pinned helplessly beneath him. At that point I'm at his

mercy. He can do and *does* whatever he wants with me. I am his subordinate.

I don't feel the need to fit into one category or the other. I think that maybe the dance between the two is what makes our taken in hand relationship so beautiful and right for us.

So, to all who find themselves anguishing over maintaining that perfect balance, I say.....

*relax and dance on!!!*³⁶⁹

"HOW TO GET STUFF DONE AROUND THE HOUSE WITHOUT NAGGING" (13 FEBRUARY 2008)

I am new to this web site and just read this complaint and the excellent reply. My husband works long hours and also goes to school nights to earn his Master's degree. As a result, I (a stay-at-home wife) am responsible for everything else.

I don't like chores like taking out the trash, but I know that if I want it done I have to do it myself. That's just the way it is.

My brother's girlfriend once complained to me that my brother wouldn't hang up a picture no matter how much she nagged. I suggested she hang it herself. A few days later, she told me with a smirk that she took my advice: she had leaned over him as he tried to nap on the couch and hung the picture! This was not my advice, and I was horrified. Of course, they had a huge fight. They eventually broke up because of her attitude.

I have things I need my husband to do, and I once joked that I would

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have to start a "honey do" jar. He got very angry and said he hated that term and I was not to use it. I meekly asked what he would like me to do, and he said to list the jobs on strips of paper and put them on the fridge—and then never to mention them again, except to thank him for the ones he did.

This system has worked out well. He does the jobs when he has the time and energy. I know they will get done—in his time, not mine. So I don't worry about them.

I, on the other hand, am disorganized and forget what he tells me to do. We tried all sorts of systems and nothing worked. One day I bought a small magnetic whiteboard and put it on the fridge. Now he writes things on there and, if they are still undone in a week, I get a spanking. This works quite well and has actually boosted my self-esteem as I see myself finishing tasks and getting more organized. The more I get done, the more I want to do.³⁷⁰

"HOW MY MOUSY MAN BECAME A LION" **(28 FEBRUARY 2008)**

I have been married for ten years to a wonderful, gentle man who apparently has been conditioned his whole life to be passive, sweet, a nice guy. He used to ask me out, and then in the car he'd look at me with a happy smile and say, "So, where are we going?" We used to argue over restaurants—he would say we could go wherever I wanted, but then he'd veto every suggestion because he wanted it to be someplace cheap.

Passive aggressive, when he wasn't just downright passive.

I have always been a strong, intelligent, willful, capable, and often dominant woman, but I have always said, since I began dating, "I wish I could find a man who is not intimidated by me," or "I wish I could find a man who is stronger than I, or who is able to take charge of me..." I said these things long before I ever knew about Taken In Hand—I simply craved being taken in hand by a stronger persona and being able, finally, to rest in the peace of that, knowing I was finally cherished and taken care of. I'm the kind of person who always takes care of others—on whom others can rely.

I married a man who in many respects is weaker than myself—maybe "weaker" is not the right term—he has been taught to *stuff* his emotions, particularly anger or annoyance, to lie to himself about his own self-worth, and to in general deny his own innate masculinity. But I married him because he was sweet, and gentle, and loving, and on some level, I have to admit, I knew he'd give me no trouble, that I could have my way, that I could control him. Sadly, that was a huge mistake, and since then, I've wished and prayed that he would rise up and become the head of the household I needed.

I wondered if I could change him. If I tried hinting, or asking, or suggesting different ways of making love, or sex play, or spanking, or talking—for ten years I was very frustrated by his seeming unwillingness to take command of our

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marriage or to meet my needs (which I wasn't really spelling out). I'd suggest I hide, and he look for me, and when he found me, to spank and ravish me—he would just giggle like a schoolboy and act confused and pinch and grab my bottom on the way up the stairs, in the maddening way that an adolescent might do it. He never got it. Of course, I never really gave it to him straight.

Perhaps I shouldn't have married him, because of being polar opposites in so many important ways, and because the power differential was so skewed away from the traditional roles I craved. If you are considering marrying a man whom you fear may not be strong enough for you, you have an important decision to make. Before you decide, though, that he is just not the man for you, give him the respect he deserves: have a *frank* conversation with him about your own needs and desires. You see, I was a liar in our marriage: I lied to myself and to him about the truth of what I really needed in our marriage. Once I stopped doing that, things got better. If your man thinks it would be wrong for him to control you, or that spanking is violence, show him this and other sites that talk about Taken In Hand relationships or that explain the difference between discipline and abuse. Talk to him about his fears, your needs, and see if he is willing to take you in hand. If not, perhaps he is not right for you.

Unless, of course, you are in love with him. Ah, then what are you going to do?

Now, what I have to tell you is that people *do* change. My husband, after ten years and many downs in an up-and-down relationship, in his gentle, loving, and open way, listened to me carefully when I suggested that the problem with our marriage was as much me as him—that I no longer desired to be a dominant force between us, that I wanted him to find his manhood, to be the head of our household, and that I was ready to be controlled by him. The idea made him excited. He knew I was right—our balance had been all wrong. He avidly read everything I sent him, and asked me to send him more each day. He came quickly to understand that I was saying not only that I wanted him to spank me, but that it was his God-given right not only to be the authority in our marriage, but to be able to enforce that authority (in a safe and non-destructive way, of course), and that his authority extends way beyond the authority to spank. That idea made him hard.

He struggles with finding the “look” my heart desires—his look usually reads as confused and tentative. I've pointed that out to him, and suddenly he is conscious of how his own confusion appears to others—as weakness, as timidity. He took upon himself the responsibility to get UN-confused, and to seek the blogs of other men in Taken in Hand or Domestic Discipline relationships. His voice often betrays that he is stuffing his emotion, or that he is unsure of his decision. I frankly told him that if he didn't use a commanding tone with me, that I would likely ignore him. His tone changed quickly (and I got a spank-

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ing for saying that). I told him that I needed—was hoping fervently—for this whole arrangement to be exciting to him rather than a turn-off, which seems to have had the effect of giving him the permission he needed (from himself, not me) to go ahead and be turned on by it rather than repelled, afraid or intimidated, and now he reports that the very thought of spanking me makes him instantly hard. Lucky me!

If you are honest, forthcoming and direct about what you need from your man, and give him the freedom to express his true feelings about it, then you can decide whether or not he has it in him to be the man of the house that you desire. But I'm also saying that my husband, a man who once described himself as a "field mouse," is now turning into a lion, one who last night flatly informed me that he wanted to take me, now, on the floor of our livingroom, and ordered me to lie down on my tummy as he entered me from behind, then he, gently but firmly, grabbed my hair and bit my shoulder as he took me, holding the flesh firmly between his teeth—if you've ever seen video of how lions mate (Google it), you will see that this is exactly how they do it. I was shocked, and immensely turned on, and the wonder of it continues—that this man whom I thought hopelessly passive has begun a transformation, has begun to discover the very first defining lines of his own manhood, and he is revelling in it. And so am I.

Starting a relationship thinking "I can change him" is a mistake—especially if your agenda for his change is your secret mission rather

than something you discuss openly together. He may end up being the man of your dreams, but you may have to have ten years of a sorry excuse for a marriage before he does. But having said that, those who are already married should not lose hope that change is possible. As my husband's example shows, people can and do change, if they want to.³⁷¹

"DO YOU SHOW YOUR APPRECIATION WHEN SHE OBEYS?" (29 FEBRUARY 2008)

My husband gives me positive reinforcement for obeying him, and this has really helped me obey him.

We have been married almost four years and before we married we attended a marriage preparation class given by our church. It was a wonderful class that raised many good questions. One had to do with a wife's submission to her husband. I learned that it was important to my future husband that I obey him. We talked at length about what this meant and I promised my then fiancée that I would obey him when we married.

At first after we married obeying my husband was easy. We were very much in love with each other and we wanted mostly the same things. But then as time went on I started to struggle somewhat with obedience. My husband was very patient with me and we talked a great deal about my struggle to obey. I wanted to respect my husband's authority as the head of our marriage, but at the same time I

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wanted my viewpoints and feelings to matter.

As my husband began to understand this and allow me to voice these concerns I was able to willingly obey a little better. But what really helped me in my obedience was something that my husband took the initiative to do on his own. He began rewarding me for my obedience. He started by simply thanking me when I did something that he asked me to do. He would come up to me, wrap his arms around me and whisper something like, "Thank you for doing that when I asked; that means a lot to me." This made me feel really good.

Then he started bringing home flowers or other small gifts every once in a while. He told me these gifts were for trying so hard to obey him. Once he told me I deserved a special treat for trying so hard to obey him and he surprised me with a mini spa day for me and my best friend. He told me that my obedience was a gift to him and that he wanted to give back to me.

All these things were wonderful and made me want to please him even more. But the most meaningful thing to me was not only his effort to reward me for my obedience but recognizing that obedience is difficult and should not be taken for granted. My husband has told me that he asks for my obedience so that he can lead our marriage in the best way possible. He needs my trust and support to do this.

I rarely struggle with obedience these days and I think it is because my husband has made such an effort

to thank me and reward me for my obedience.³⁷²

"HOLDING THE HAND THAT SPANKS ME" (2 MARCH 2008)

Yesterday, after reading many scenarios of other couples who are working out the realities of their Taken in Hand relationships, my husband and I decided to e-mail each other a written fantasy while my husband ("Beast" to my "Belle") was at work. He wrote in the first and second person a scene that he imagined between us, "imagine I'm doing this, and then you..." while I wrote a story, full of detail, in the first and third person, "I said...., but then he...." It was very hot, though we both recognized that the intensity level at which we were writing was way beyond where we are at the moment of our relationship (which seems almost like a new marriage). Still, it kept us feeling very connected to each other erotically all day, and excited to see each other when he came home.

Last night, Beast decided to spank me, not because of anything in particular I had done, but because he just felt like it. He also felt annoyed at my critical tone over dinner, and let me know it with a rapid set of spanks to my bare flesh. It was a small thing, but a sign of a much bigger issue we need to address over time. Peeling the onion of my dominant nature to get to my softness. Soon he felt a change in mood towards the erotic, and went with his impulses. He is reveling in his newfound sense of freedom, and I in my

new-found sense of being married to a *man*. Later, we decided to sit in bed and watch a bit of the movie "G.I. Jane," so that I could have the satisfaction of watching a woman kick some ass for a while.

I don't know who reached out first, but at some point I realized we were holding hands. The realization came on me slowly, but I began to focus on the fact that his warm, strong hand was holding mine while we watched a movie. Understand, this just never happened before. We would watch a movie together in the family room more as an avoidance of intimacy than an opportunity to be close—and we never held hands. Now, looking at his hand holding mine, I lost track of the movie for a minute—the feeling I had of overwhelming comfort and warmth, knowing that I was holding this hand that just moments before had spanked me hard and then gave me intense pleasure, was deep and warm and very moving.

We have a long way to go. We need advice and encouragement. The onion Beast has the job of peeling is large and densely packed. I am still in many ways stronger and more sure of myself than he is. He needs to step up and I need to step down, and both of us feel our tasks to be immeasurably hard. We know it will be a long process. But for the first time in ten years I feel like I am in capable hands. I want to thank you all so much for sharing your ideas, your thoughts and even your intimacies, as they have helped to save a marriage.³⁷³

"WHY SHE WOULDN'T TALK ABOUT IT - AND WHY SHE IS TALKING ABOUT IT NOW" (16 APRIL 2008)

For years, Elle didn't want to talk about our Taken in Hand relationship, but for the past few months, she's opened up and is now willing to talk freely.

One of the things we've talked about is the subject of talking itself. I'd asked her several times why she didn't want to discuss consent or her needs or desires. She usually gave me a vague answer about not wanting it to be mechanical or not wanting it to be a game.

The truth of the matter was that Elle didn't really know why she didn't want to talk about it—she just didn't. And for the past few months she hasn't really known why she now *is* willing to talk.

I figured it out—at least, I figured out a major chunk of it.

For her, and perhaps for other women whose careers involve leadership, explaining is a part of leading.

Elle is a teacher. She spends most of her work day instructing high-school students—telling them what to do, teaching them, controlling their disruptive behavior—in other words, being in charge.

When she explains something, she goes into teacher mode. It is very difficult for her to let go when she's in that mode. In order for her to talk to me about my being in charge of her, she had to be comfortable that I wouldn't do whatever she told me to do. She needed reassurance that I

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would listen to her, but make my own decisions about what to do.

Once I started overriding her, she developed a comfort level that she could tell me what she wanted without being in charge. In fact, somewhere along the way, I discovered that I needed to deliberately say “no” to her from time to time so that she could feel a sense of power from me.

With that sense of comfort, she began to open up and started talking—in detail—about what she wanted. Still, she usually starts off by saying something like, “Can I make a suggestion?” or “Can we talk about XXX?” or “This is just a suggestion, but...” And she is usually in a physically submissive position when she does it.

So, why didn't she tell me this years ago? Why didn't she just say, “If I explain what I want, could you please just take it as a suggestion and make up your own mind about what to do?”

The simple answer is that she didn't know. She didn't understand the relationship in her own mind between explaining and leading. It was too deeply ingrained in her psyche after twenty-plus years of teaching.

Once this notion clicked in my own mind, I tested the waters.

During one of her “I'm not telling you what to do, but...” moments, I said to her, “You know, I'm not one of your students. If you get bossy with me, *you're* the one whose going to get bent over a desk and paddled with a ruler.”

Since then, she's been even more willing to talk about what she wants. Of course, this isn't the single cause

of her reluctance to talk about being Taken in Hand. There's more to it than that. But it helped me—us—to understand her reluctance to express herself.

Anyway, for husbands whose wives don't want to talk about their desire to be led, consider her life outside the home. If she's a manager, a company president, a military officer, a cop, or has any role where people follow her instructions—maybe she's too accustomed to being obeyed.

Remind her that you're in charge. You don't take orders, but you do listen to suggestions.³⁷⁴

“WHY BEING MARRIED BEATS PLAYING THE PICKUP GAME” (28 APRIL 2008)

If you have a lot of women you can get good at the psychology of pickup and for some men that's what they want. But for me as the dominant male in a Taken In Hand marriage, marriage is much more enjoyable.

When you're doing pickup, you have to act the way that works to close the deal, or the woman won't put out. The women are in control, not you. You're controlled by the women and by the game of pickup. You're not yourself, you're a performing circus monkey entertaining the woman and her friends with your carefully crafted stories and your props. It's unsatisfying. If you put on a good enough show, say the right things and make the right moves at the right time, you get the reward. If you don't, she doesn't put

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out. The women are in control, not you.

That's dissatisfying if you're a male that wants to be in control as I do.

Compare that with my situation now: with my wife, I don't have to put on a show or play the performing monkey to get what I want—I am being myself and have complete control over my wife—and she even likes it.

Why would I want to go against my dominant nature and be controlled by one woman after another when I can be myself and have real total control of a woman who wants me and enjoys being submitted by me—and who never says no to me? There's no comparison.

I never thought I'd ever have this much control of a woman but I do, and it's incredible. My wife is the best. Marriage to her is much more erotic than any number of one nighters. The sex is MUCH better, because I'm actually in control, and being in control is very relaxing for me. Pickup didn't give me the real control my dominant nature and sexuality needs. And besides, who wants to play the performing monkey all your life?³⁷⁵

"A KISS ON THE HAND" (29 APRIL 2008)

It was a beautiful spring afternoon. The wedding mass ended and guests waiting to congratulate the newlyweds formed a rather long queue just outside the church. Somewhere near the end of the line stood a distinctively women-only group: five or six bride's girlfriends, all hopeless spinsters (as she was too

a few months before). I didn't precisely fit in, being already six years married, but as my husband could not attend the service, I joined the group just to have some company. There was a lot of girly chatter: one person commented on bride's dress, another started recalling details of the ceremony:

"Have you noticed when he kissed her hand after putting the ring on? I just loved it. It's so incredibly tender and fitting. It's a shame that men do not kiss ladies' hands anymore..."

"And how do you feel about a woman kissing a man's hand, then?" I asked (rather thoughtlessly; I didn't have anything particular in mind, just get carried by conversation).

"No, this freaks me out. I know they say it's about kissing the ring rather than his hand, but it just doesn't feel right."

Hmm. My interlocutor had some very specific ideas about what felt right. Good for her, as long as she isn't going to force them on everybody else...

My thoughts suddenly flew umpteen years back. I remembered an equally beautiful spring afternoon in my high-school sophomore year. I was walking down a bridge on my way home, holding hands with the guy who was (several years later) to become my husband. We weren't even actually dating yet, just being friends, but already with a clear romantic overtones. Or at least I was getting romantic, while he just benevolently accepted my little gestures of affection. We had never before as much as kissed; that hand-holding was the closest contact we engaged in.

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While we were walking together (and probably talking, even though I could remember precious little from that conversation!), I began to feel warm and a little dizzy, overwhelmed with tenderness and sheer admiration for him. He was definitely one of the smartest kids in school in terms of academic achievements, but also a young man of as much unfailing commonsense and high morals as could ever be found in an eighteen-year-old (or so I believed; but since I still believe that, there is no need to make such a reservation). Seeking a way to express those feelings, I suddenly raised his hand perhaps to shoulder level and kissed it eagerly. And the very same moment my heart sank. Did I just do the weirdest thing imaginable? Was I crazy for doing that? Did I freak him out?

It turned out, I didn't. He didn't say anything; he accepted a kiss on the hand—and my admiration—graciously, as if it was the most natural thing in the world. (Well, it certainly felt natural *for me*.) Then we just continued to walk, holding hands. But something was being born between the two of us, something that in due course was to become the ever-growing marital love that we live today. We actually repeated this hand-holding and hand-kissing ritual on a few further occasions (although soon we moved on to more passionate kinds of kisses).

Nowadays, if I happen to kiss my husband's hand, it is more often than not in sexual context, where the hand is just one of several body parts which are getting this sort of attention. But sexual or not, it's still

an expression of my deep-rooted feelings of appreciation, admiration and love.

At this point I had to abandon my sweet musings, since it came my turn to congratulate the newlyweds. "You probably think (I said, half-jokingly, to them) that it is impossible to love anybody more than you love each other now. Believe me: this is just not true. You can get to love each other more and more every day. And this is the best thing about being married. And this is what I wish you two." And then I gave them the flowers and smiled, as much to them as to my own thoughts. And the bride smiled back.³⁷⁶

"A QUESTION OF COMMITMENT - WILL HE BE THERE WHEN SHE NEEDS HIM?" (5 MAY 2008)

I come from a very different generation—one where commitment counted and a sense of duty was expected.

On the field of play, one remained committed to one's teammates regardless of win or loss. On, over, or even under the battlefield, one remained loyal to one's comrades regardless of personal cost.

Consequently, I carried the same level of commitment into marriage. Faithfulness was an expectation—as was dedication to the children that one fathered.

To use a woman and to assume no responsibility for her future welfare is the height of cowardice. It is the equivalent from fleeing in the heat of

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battle. Real men do not do it. They would rather die first.

It is only to such a man that a woman will pledge her obedience and willingly accept his disciplining hand.

Heroes in a woman's eyes come in all shapes and sizes. The one question for which a woman must have an answer is: Will he be there when she needs him? A woman unwilling to ask this question is not worth having.

Although the grass may seem greener on the other side of the fence, the problems remain very much the same. There are no perfect women in this world. Neither are there perfect men.

Throughout the history of mankind, the only men and women worth having have been those with the will to do that which is necessary to make their relationship together work. That is marriage. All else is a sham.³⁷⁷

"WOMAN WHISPERER" (10 MAY 2008)

Single men sometimes say that they would never countenance marrying a resistant woman, and that what they are looking for is a meekly obedient, submissive woman. When they meet a strong, spirited high-dominance woman who is not meekly, sweetly submissive from the outset, they write her off and move on to the next woman.

Perhaps these men don't want a Taken In Hand relationship, as it appears, but if they do, then rejecting all these women may be a huge mistake. Taken In Hand inclined

women are not generally meekly submissive by default, but they do want to be *brought to submission* by the right man. And when they have been mastered by the right man, many of them precisely blossom into the peaceful, obedient, even submissive woman that these men are looking for.

The Taken In Hand wife you might see serenely gliding about the room so meekly submissively serving her beloved husband as you dine together at their home was probably very different when they first met. At that time, she was probably wilful, proudly independent, and might well have been appalled had anyone suggested that she might one day serve and submit to a man. But the man she married kindly, calmly, firmly, *submitted her*. As their relationship progressed, his *active control* of her *brought her to submission* — to that serene submissive state you see her in now. And if there is ever any need for further action to keep her in hand, her husband will act, bringing her back into submission. And this is precisely what makes their home so enviably serene. Were her husband not prepared to take the necessary *action to actively control her* on an on-going basis, she would never have been able to reach her current state of peaceful submission.

Taken In Hand women need a man who does not resent (or indeed reject altogether!) the idea of on-going action to control her. All single men wanting a Taken In Hand relationship need to understand this. To expect a woman to be meekly obedient at the very start of a relationship, before you have even got

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married, is unrealistic. It also guarantees that no Taken In Hand woman will want you, because it appears that you are not very take-charge, and that you have no heart for the reality of actually controlling her in real life.

I was watching *Dog Whisperer* the other day. For those who don't know, it is a TV programme that follows dog behaviourist Cesar Millan as he meets unbalanced, troublesome or disturbed dogs and their owners and, using his kind, gentle, firm, calm assertiveness, he—as he puts it—rehabilitates dogs and trains people. He helps owners to become calm assertive pack leaders able to submit their dogs into a calm submissive state. No dog is too difficult for Cesar Millan to handle. No matter how severe the case, no matter how aggressively dominant the dog is, Cesar calmly, confidently, and with gentle firmness puts the dog into a calm submissive state and brings balance to the dog-owner relationship. At the end of the process, a dangerous “red zone” ultra-aggressive, dominant dog is now a peaceful, happy, submissive dog that obeys its owner.

When a single man says that he wants a meekly submissive woman rather than one who needs to be taken in hand and *brought* to submission, I find myself thinking of Cesar Millan, and asking myself what would happen if Cesar Millan were to decide that he would only deal with dogs that are already meekly submissive.

Women, like dogs, can be brought to that peaceful, happy submissive state of balance and serenity. A

woman loves only her *master*—the one who has *mastered* her and *brought* her to submission—the one who *masters* her.

If you are a man in search of a woman with whom to have a Taken In Hand relationship, and you reject any woman who isn't meekly submissive by default—anyone who needs to be taken in hand and mastered—you almost guarantee that you will never be able to create a Taken In Hand relationship. Instead, enjoy and welcome the process of mastering the wonderful spirited woman you meet who is not in the slightest bit submissive but who wants a Taken In Hand relationship. It is that very woman who may ultimately be the most deeply submitted to you.³⁷⁸

“TAKEN IN HAND IS NOTHING TO DO WITH PATRIARCHY” (14 MAY 2008)

Institutions and structures such as the various forms of patriarchy are an affront to the commanding man. When society privileges the male without regard to his actual qualities it creates a society of bullies and thugs whose excesses are excused because such abuses are culturally acceptable.

Being dominant is not about being a bully, having power invested in you just because of your gender rather than because of personal skills, competencies and disciplines devalues the dominant position.

I have three daughters and I have ensured that all of them have the skills, and fortitude to be able to choose their relationships and not to

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be structurally dependent on any men for their well-being. If someone wants a relationship with any of my daughters they are going to have to be able to command her respect and not rely on patriarchal advantage.

I believe that all women should have rights, and equally important the means to access and enforce those rights. There is nothing inconsistent about Taken In Hand and women having rights.

I expect my wife to constantly choose to remain inside my domain because in that place she finds peace, security and the freedom to be herself... I do not see trapping women culturally, financially or otherwise into any relationship as being acceptable.³⁷⁹

"AMID CHAOS, A QUIET DIGNITY" (18 MAY 2008)

It was the early 1970s, and a time of great military upheaval in Southeast Asia. To call it the Vietnam War would be a rather vague generalization; as the conflict knew few, if any, real borders. I was part of an organization that did not exist; supplying imaginary armies, who were fighting enemies that were all too real!

Inevitably, one day, it all began to unravel... War is chaos; plain and simple. But usually it's a semi-organized chaos, with a modicum of purpose, process, and results. Our missions quickly changed from indirect re-supply, to emergency combat support, to (inevitably) evacuation; usually under fire. Our "clients" were the Montagnard "hill people",

who were the paid mercenaries fighting the North Vietnamese. This "army" was truly an army of the people, as they lived and fought from their home villages. Their wives and children were their support infrastructure; both in terms of logistics, as well as moral support.

As America began to withdraw from Southeast Asia, the NVA (North Vietnamese Army) began to overrun the traditional sanctuaries of the Montagnard people. The evacuations of some of the more remote camps soon took on an almost surreal urgency. Our days and nights soon merged into a weary fog of flying under-maintained aircraft; landing at impossibly-small landing strips; taking off grossly overloaded; and dodging increasingly-fierce anti-aircraft fire.

As the situation worsened, and the evacuations became more desperate, the chaos of the evacuations intensified. Families were often separated, possibly never to be re-united; and some were unavoidably abandoned. Believe me, one never forgets the last radio transmissions of those who know that the inevitable is upon them!

Toward the end, there was one evacuation that is indelibly etched into my mind. It began like any other; dodging the red and green tracer fire of the NVA gunners; and setting down amidst the swirling red dust of the village center. Initially, the evacuations had been calm, orderly affairs, but as the fighting worsened, they began to take on the fierce urgency of the truly desperate. Our aircraft were mobbed, and it was first-come, first-loaded aboard. To

say that chaos reigned would be an understatement!

Then, suddenly, through the dust and smoke of this hellish inferno; there appeared a man leading a woman and four small children. Amidst all of the running, shouting, desperate people; they were calmly walking toward my aircraft; as though they hadn't a care in the world. Wordlessly, this man loaded his children on-board; then turned to his wife. As I looked on, it was as if time stood still. I watched her look up at him, with a look of love and trust and admiration; such as I had never before seen in my life. His quiet dignity and calm demeanor seemed to reassure all those around him... They embraced, and, without a backward glance, he walked back to the village defenses.

His wife continued to look at him, even as we took off, and the village faded quickly from sight. I'll never forget the look on her face... Not fear, or pain, or loss... But a radiant pride; lighting her face, and shining forth from her eyes. In that instant, I understood that I was in the presence of an intense, uncompromising, and timeless love and devotion; such as few ever attain. To this day, I have often wondered at the story of this man and woman... Who were they? How did they meet? What was their life like?

One thing was certain... It had undoubtedly been a life of love and devotion... That this man was the head of his family was, for me, beyond dispute.³⁸⁰

"A DEEPER CONNECTION" (19 MAY 2008)

Human nature leads us to community-driven activities and to search out like minded people. Whether it be church or sport or classes of some kind, haven't we all hoped that somewhere out there is another person who really understands us? Someone who can see into our souls, who can turn the light on in our hearts and take us from dull to illuminating? We listen to love songs and hear about the love we hope to find and how it makes us feel. We watch the public face of couples and gaze longingly into their perfect world; you know the one where they never fight and the respect holds them together like an energy force so strong the world will step back and invent a new word for it.

On the flip side, of course, most of us have been in relationships and they, surprisingly, were not at all like our fantasy of them! In actuality, my marriage was very lonely, I never felt understood and definitely not respected. Walking away from that it was the hardest thing I ever had to do. It took many years to realize that however hopeful I was, things were not going to change. Over time, I have tried to learn to watch out for red flags and to have enough self respect to know I deserve a healthy committed relationship. For those of us with a submissive side, I think this is particularly difficult, to distinguish between a man who is taking because he is selfish and looking for some short term thing versus an

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honest good man, who knows the value of getting all of a woman for the long term. As others have pointed out, the takers are often very good at knowing how to play a great surface game to hook you in. I myself, am also an optimist and painfully good at making excuses for men a la—he's not a phone person. You know what, if he can't find time to call you every few days at least, there's a problem!

So why Taken In Hand? Taken in hand for women, because we are givers. Taken in hand because givers know that giving yourself completely in trust is the most amazing thing and we need to feel the freedom that comes with it. Taken in hand because it is not a game like BDSM or something short term, that is merely something superficial that doesn't resonate to the core of us. Taken in hand because it can only get better and more intense over time as the connection increases while you build on the trust and honesty and communication between you. Taken in hand needs the most stable of foundations and much work is required to build that foundation. Taken in hand is, essentially, traditional marriage. Taken in hand for men who know the truth of this, are capable of loving and respecting women, can understand the real value of what such a relationship can bring to their lives and would never, ever mess with this most sacred of bonds.³⁸¹

"ROMANCE NOVELS, GOOD GIRLS AND MOTHERS" (20 MAY 2008)

To understand a woman, read what she reads

I was reading an article, the other day, about romance novels, specifically the Harlequin and Barbara Cartland variety. The article said that many of the novels written before the 1990s included a key scene where the hero rapes the heroine the first time they make love.

Apparently, readers envisioned themselves in the role of the heroine, being forced to have sex. The idea is that having sex wasn't the heroine's "fault". The heroine—and by extension, the reader—could forgive herself and still be a "good girl" because she had no choice in the matter.

The hero-rapist was still a hero, because he took the moral failing upon himself, thus sparing her the shame. In fact, the heroine would often try to reform him afterward, making him into a good husband and lover.

The article seemed far-fetched, until I checked out some of my wife's stash of romance novels—books that she has had in boxes for decades and still takes out to read now and then.

It wasn't too difficult for me to find the rape scenes in several of them. The page was dog-eared.

Perhaps this notion wasn't so far-fetched after all.

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To understand a woman, understand her relationship with her mother.

Like many women, Elle has the whole good girl/bad girl thing ingrained in her psyche. Despite having left her mother's house almost thirty years ago, my wife still has trouble making any kind of sound when we make love—for fear of her mother hearing her and punishing her.

Of course, it isn't her mother she fears, it's her mother's voice in her own head. It's the latent fear-memory that her mom is just outside the bedroom door, listening for a soft moan or a squeak from the bed—ready to burst in, hairbrush in hand.

To this day, Elle usually says, "I'm not really in the mood," or "I don't need it, but I'll touch you," if I casually try to get things started.

If I insist, if I seduce her, if I don't take "no" for an answer, she enjoys it. But if I force her to admit that she wants it, she resents it.

In calm moments, in the living-room, we've talked about this many times. She says that she likes it, that she knows it isn't wrong. But that's "knowing," not "feeling". In more heated moments—in the bedroom, the symbolic scene of most maternal punishments—her mother's voice rings in her ears, resonating with the guilt and shame seared into her heart, soul, and bottom.

She needs something to answer her mother's voice. She needs a fig-leaf. She needs it to be my fault.

"I couldn't help it! He knows me too well! I can't resist him!" or,

"He's my husband. Being a good wife is more important than being a good girl," or,

"He forced me! He's stronger than I am! He made me do it!"

She can't say, "yes" willingly. She needs me to say it for her, or force it from her.

Lovemaking isn't the only thing to which she cannot consent. She can't be submissive to me—no matter how much she wants to, no matter the fact that it's her desire driving it rather than mine. I must *take* her in hand. She can't *give* herself.

The romance novels have solutions for this, too. The heroes dominate their heroines quite effectively, without the need for the heroine to actually want to be dominated. Spanking was one of several methods used to bring the heroine to surrender herself to her hero, to make her feel like she belonged to him.

It was a symbol of the dominance of men. Men are stronger. They get their way with women. The heroine can't help but be brought—kicking and screaming if necessary—under the influence and maybe even control of the hero.

So why was this an issue for Elle? Why couldn't she be submissive if she wanted to be?

To understand today's women, understand their relationship with feminism

Strangely—or perhaps not so strangely—Elle's mother was an early feminist (perhaps a pre-feminist) of the 1950s. She insisted that her daughters think of themselves as men's equals—that they couldn't just be wives and mothers.

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They had to have careers and had to be equal partners to their husbands—if they got married at all.

In fact, when Elle and I were first married, her mother seemed to be under the impression that her relationship with Elle was more important than Elle's relationship with me. She tried really hard to keep Elle independent of me—mostly so that Elle could stay dependent on her.

If anything, she should have been happy to have me as a son-in-law. I was a stronger believer in women's equality than either Elle or her mom, but the fact that I supported Elle when she stood up to her mother sort of nixed that possibility. I guess we were *both* supposed to be subservient to her or something.

With all of that in the mix, Elle still ended up feeling that she couldn't put herself in my hands.

To understand a woman, we must understand our role in her story

I had always known about Elle's love of romance novels. I even read a couple of them years ago (hoping to gain an understanding of the female psyche). I got the hero/rescuer thing. I knew that I was supposed to rescue Elle from her evil mother.

But I hadn't completely understood my role as the romantic hero. I wasn't just supposed to free her from the evil domineering female. I was supposed to *replace* her mother (parents) as her new lord and master—not set her free to be in charge of *herself*.

I guess I had written off the hero-rapist paradigm and the dominant-head-of-household-who-sometimes-spanks-the-heroine scenario. I fig-

ured that these themes were a hold-over from a previous age and that Elle wasn't turned on by those features of the novels.

But I was wrong. Elle, like many women before and since, had a long-standing, deep-seated, hidden, secret desire to be wrangled, trussed up, thrown over the saddle and taken by her hero to his cabin—where she would be at his mercy.

She would have no choice but to surrender her virtue to him or have it forced from her. Likewise, he would bend her to his will—and if she was too defiant, she would be spanked—just like John Wayne spanked the occasional movie heroine.

Sometimes, one flower is enough

Elle dreamed of having all of it, but knew that I wanted her to be my equal. She was OK with that for a long time—even tickled by it and appreciative of it.

But, as she said to me a few days ago, she preferred the Barbara Cartland historical-period novels. Yes, women were subject to men in those days. Men were in charge. But the men in Barbara Cartland's novels "... let their women have a little more freedom than other women of the time."

When she said that, the smile on her face and the way she snuggled up to me told me that the whole "husband in charge of me" thing, and the occasional spanking, were irresistible desires, not occasional fantasies.

I didn't ask her about the rape themes. Those are too close to the bone for her to discuss openly, and I

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already knew how she felt. There were too many dog-eared rape scenes for me to ignore the pattern.

It was usually rape the first time only. After that, the heroine surrendered more willingly. That fit with something else from our past.

It's hard at first, but after twenty years or so it gets easier

The first time I made love to Elle, I waited until she said yes. I thought it was the right thing to do. Years afterward, she told me that part of her wanted me to do it sooner—not that she actually wanted me to override her no—just that she would have forgiven me if I had.

It felt dirty, having to admit that she wanted it. That wasn't the way it was supposed to be. The man was supposed to know that "no" didn't mean "no". She heard the inner voice of her mother that first time, telling her how much of a disappointment she was.

In the intervening years, she told me how difficult it was for her to open up to me in those early years. She felt the unconscious burn of her mom's hairbrush when she initiated sex or allowed herself to be expressive during sex, knowing I liked to hear her.

It's only been the past four years of working toward taken in hand that have allowed me to become comfortable with insisting, forcing, not giving her a choice, instructing her, and punishing her for defiance or disobedience.

She's a moving target

Some of the recent positive change has been her finally being able to talk about it and some has been my

coming to terms with her need for male dominance. I have an inner-voice of my own, telling me that dominating women is wrong. It's certainly not my father's voice nor my mother's. Rather, it's a reaction *against* their view of feminists as uppity women.

But the past four years of exploring Taken in Hand, combined with a new understanding of my wife's enjoyment of classic romance novels, has helped me understand why it's so painful for her to say yes, and why she really does not want the equality that I so much wanted her to have.

Check the nightstand

For other men who want to understand women, who want to understand the desires of one woman in particular, her nightstand can be a treasure trove. Find the books she has hidden away where her mother can't find them (even if her mother isn't looking anymore). Look for the pages with the bent corners and the broken spines.

If this is what she reads when she wants to light her own fire, perhaps we can light her fire with the same match.

It's not enough to read what is there. We have to read in the light of everything we know about her. If we're lucky, we can ask her and she might tell us why that particular page has lipstick on it, why the spine is broken at the part where Tybalt stabs Mercutio. If not, read it over and think about her in that context.

Maybe she likes the rake—the bad boy—the dangerous guy with a sword. There might be a fantasy in

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her heart, waiting for you to fulfil it. (Elle got really turned-on one day when I threatened her with a butter knife. Cold steel against her throat made her tingle all over, despite it being less dangerous than a piece of paper).

More likely, though, perusing her erotic reading could lead to something unexpected, something we thought we knew but never really understood.

In recent years, Elle has been reading authors like Jacqueline Carey (*A Kiss of Shadows*) and Laurell K. Hamilton (*Kushiel's Dart*). Perhaps I should take a hint that she's moved beyond Barbara Cartland.

Humility is useful

Oh, speaking of those romance novels—it's a curious thing. Her mother bought her most of them when she was growing up. Her mom had her own huge box of them. She and Elle and her sister read them openly, borrowing them from each other.

I asked Elle why her mother gave her racy romance novels if she was so dead set against the obvious result of reading them. Elle answered, "They were just books..."

Which goes to show how little I still understand about women and their mothers.³⁸²

"TELLING HIM THINGS THAT YOU CAN'T TELL HIM" (21 MAY 2008)

I was re-reading a Taken In Hand topic, "How badly I want this; how difficult it is to ask for it." The topic talks about things that women find

it impossible to say to their husbands and lovers.

Elle and I developed a partial solution that worked for us. Maybe it—or something like it—might work for other couples.

About fifteen years ago, I bought two sets of blank, half-sized stationery with envelopes: one red set, the other blue. They were the kind of note-paper that one would use to write thank-you notes or short letters to friends or family.

I gave the red set to Elle and kept the blue for myself. I asked her to use her set to write notes to me and leave them where I would find them, perhaps not right away. I told her I would do the same with the blue ones.

My original intent was for us to write love letters to each other and say things that are difficult to say on the spur of the moment. Writing it in a note would give us time to say it exactly the way we wanted to.

To be honest, I really was wanting to have a way of being romantic and sappy and sentimental, without having to say things face to face. I figured that if she had her own set to write notes to me, it would make it easier for me to get up the courage.

She added an idea to it. She suggested that we not talk about anything that we wrote in the notes. No, "I loved the note you left me," or "Did you really mean that?" I think she sensed my true purpose and wanted to give me the freedom to be as expressive as I wanted to be.

We started leaving red and blue envelopes in dresser drawers, stacks of towels, coat pockets, and other places that get checked occasionally

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rather than every day. One fun thing about it was that a note might not be received for days or even weeks.

In fact, sometimes I would check to see if she if a particular note was still in its place, so I would know if she had read it.

What resulted was more than we originally intended. Yes, we wrote love notes to each other, but she also started writing about things that she wanted to do, or have me do, that she couldn't ask for.

Sometimes her wants and desires were intimate and sexual—or even downright lurid and pornographic. ("I like it when you hold me down and XXXX. Just make sure I can breathe," or "What you did last night—XXXX—was nice. Next time do it harder.")

Other times, she asked for things that she felt were selfish, but that she knew I wouldn't mind doing. She even wrote, "I want a new car. A Jeep. A red one. One that I can take the top off and feel the wind in my hair." (A few weeks later, I decided she needed to buy a four-wheel-drive car so she could get around better in the winter. It was a jeep with a removable top so we would have a convertible for the summer too.)

Occasionally, she told me things that I needed to hear, but didn't want to hear. More often, though, she used her notes to say things that she couldn't say, things that "women just don't say".

We don't write notes like that too much anymore. We've since found other ways of saying things to each other, but it was an important step

in our relationship that helped us open up to each other.

I'm not sure if this would work for a woman who wanted to tell her husband that she wanted to be Taken in Hand. Some women would still find it too direct if they had to address something directly to their husbands.

But... a more indirect approach might be to keep a diary and let her husband know that it's OK for him to read it—so long as he never discusses it with her and always puts it back right where he found it so she doesn't know that he read it (because she would absolutely die if she knew he was reading that very personal stuff!)

A diary has the advantage of being a third-person. A woman can write in a diary as if she were writing to a female confidant and talk about her husband as if he weren't listening. ("You wouldn't believe what my husband let me get away with yesterday. I think he's afraid of hurting my feelings or something. If he only knew what I would do for him if he just put his foot down and insisted on it...").

The particular form or method can be whatever works for her and him. The key is that women often need to say things indirectly. Writing it down—rather than saying it out loud—means that she can keep it at arms-length. She can have some deniability.

If that's not indirect enough, there's always the possibility of using someone else's words. Maybe a character in a novel said something that rings true. If a copy of that novel happened to end up on his

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nightstand, with a bookmark and some text highlighted in it, well *she* didn't say it, some character in a book said it.

In many relationships between men and women, the man's need for direct, straightforward communication conflicts with the woman's need to be indirect—to not be too forward. Instead of speaking face to face and being cryptic, it might work better to speak clearly, but have some insulation so that the message is delivered at a time when she isn't aware of it.

That way, the indirect and the direct can meet halfway.³⁸³

"CAT WHISPERER" (22 MAY 2008)

This woman whispering* really struck a chord for me—I'm someone who works well with animals, cats in particular. I used to have a number of cats over the years, and where I live in India, many of them were from the street, and didn't much trust most humans. It felt really good to be able to know how to calm and connect with them—domesticate them and give them a safe home—but as a child if I wasn't there to remind them of that connection, they'd quickly revert to wild behavior and run away...

As I grew up people have often commented on my feline attributes...and I think a lot of trouble emerged from the fact that I was also quite wild...I'd blow hot and cold...alluring and aggressive...on top of this I had a whole lot of opin-

ions about the world that most men found shocking—in a word, I was a whole lot of trouble with a lot of emotional baggage attached—and most men tap danced around me, tried to grapple me with lies or with tasteless vulgar invitations, and in the instances where I tried to subdue myself for their benefit against my better judgement, I lost respect for myself and for them as well, causing a lot of self-loathing and a loss of faith in the existence of that thing called love.

These "encounters" (because they were hardly what one could call relationships) left me cold till I met my husband. He was a real "cat whisperer"... I don't know how he found the right words to keep me safe in myself...he's always exerted this tremendous power over my entire sense of happiness. He only has to put his hand on the small of my back and I immediately cool down... And in the darkest places of my mind he has the only authority to get me to open the windows and let the light in. He's always seen the "me" in me and from the first day he came into my life he unlocked all kinds of abilities and strengths. I'm a visual artist now and even that process is imbued with a sense of excitement as I know he won't be happy with me unless I remain disciplined and produce the quantity and quality of creative work that he expects of me...

Come to think of it, he definitely is a dog whisperer as well: whenever we're out taking a late night stroll, street dogs seem to become attracted to him, and sometimes when he's feeling playful he'll be surrounded

* "Woman whisperer," 10 May 2008.

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by them, all of them lying on their backs to have their bellies stroked in supplication. It's quite funny to see some of the meeker pedestrians walk by and look at him as if he's lost his marbles...

We've been through a lot together, and have been through a lot of changes as people because we met when we were quite young—I was in high school and he was in college. Now we're in our late twenties settling into our jobs and homes...

And I guess naturally we seem to have been moving closer to a Taken in Hand relationship but when I found this site it really helped me understand where we are going and how to get there faster. So I wanted to thank everyone for sharing their thoughts. We've only just started this journey, formally speaking, and already I'm purring...³⁸⁴

"BEWITCHING SAMANTHA" (26 MAY 2008)

As a child of the 1960s, living in the US, I grew up watching *Bewitched* on TV. In my formative years I saw this woman, Samantha, who was at once a complete ditz and thoroughly enchanting.

She could not solve even the simplest problem—despite having incredible magical powers—unless someone else told her what to do. She was desperately in love with a man who was even more idiotic than she (although the second of the two actors who played Darren Stevens reduced the moronic factor quite a bit).

Yet, I wasn't sure why, but I knew that I wanted one of those. The long, not-quite-blond hair, the womanly curves, the face, the loving smile, the absolute loyalty and devotion to her husband against all criticism (and all common sense), that was the woman I wanted to marry someday.

I was too young to understand sexual attraction or to have any idea of the pleasure of loving a woman. But somewhere in my developing male brain, I knew that there was something really good about having a wife like her hang on your every word and throw herself into your arms at the end of a day.

If only she had a really brainy twin sister.

As a child, I liked girls, especially the smart ones who challenged my mind. They were great friends, much better than boys who were more into physical sports.

As I matured, I grew to understand what that mysterious quality about women—both the girls I knew who were becoming women, and the image of Samantha Stevens, etched in my mind as the definitive wife. I discovered why those soft, round parts of a woman were so desirable.

There were things that men could do with women like Samantha that went beyond fun and games. They had a magical power that far exceeded the mere ability to turn someone into a frog. They could give pure pleasure with a touch. They were *designed* for pleasure and longed to have pleasure taken from them, voluntarily or otherwise.

In addition to the Samantha women, there were the other ones—the

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ones I respected. The ones I *liked*. The ones I could play chess with and actually stand a chance of losing to. They knew things that I didn't. They had different interests that I could learn to enjoy with them.

In college, I met the one perfect woman. She was shaped like Samantha, with the womanly figure and the shoulder-length golden hair. She was warm and loving like Samantha, *and* she had a mind, and self-assurance greater than any girl or woman I had ever known.

She was a soul-mate.

It was a strange existence. I respected her, trusted her, admired her as a true equal and life partner, and yet, she had that starry-eyed, devoted, "bewitched" look and manner about her.

If I touched her face with my fingertips or ran my hand down her back, she would melt into my arms. She would look up at me and almost worship me.

She would lie back and beg me take her. She would do my bidding, fall to her knees and pleasure me, cook for me, darn my socks, embroider pillows for my family for Christmas. When we married, she insisted on taking my name.

This was very, very wrong.

I couldn't do that to a friend. I couldn't take advantage of someone that smart, that witty, that powerful, that capable of having her own career. It was like guzzling cheap wine from a rare golden goblet.

To bend a woman like that to my will, to put her on her back and *take* my pleasure from her, to have her fall to her knees before me because she was under my spell—

that was a profane use of a pearl of great price.

Of course, I made love to her. Of course we shared the pleasures that married couples share. But I didn't take the privileges that are reserved to men. I didn't use the magic that would let me command her, dominate her, compel her obedience, even though it was so easy to do.

In fact, she gave some of my male privilege, despite my attempts to share the fruits with her. She wouldn't get on top of me when we made love. She pursued a career as a teacher—one that would allow her to work anywhere that my career would take me. She put my needs before hers, in ways that I didn't always see.

Then, one day, we were watching an episode of M*A*S*H. She looked at me, looked at Loretta Switt, and asked, "Is that why you always want me to wear my hair long and full?"

"Do I remind you of 'Hot-Lips'?"

It wasn't an accusation, more of a search for insight.

I said no, but she saw something in my expression that said there was more to the story. In short order, I confessed that she reminded me of Samantha.

Rather than being insulted by a comparison to a subservient airhead, she was flattered. Samantha fit perfectly with her notion of a loving, devoted, beautiful wife, although I did warn her about the brainier twin sister variation.

Still, I wouldn't treat her the way I was tempted to. I didn't take advantage of her willingness to surrender to me or take direction from me. I could no more do that to her

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than I could enslave a good friend because he happened to be black.

But part of me really wanted to. It was a decedent fantasy to put Elle in her place, to take her whenever I wanted, regardless of her mood. I longed to put her over my knee and use my hand on her womanly form, make he beg for forgiveness for the pettiest offense.

There were a few things, a few temptations to which I succumbed. Sometimes she even made it necessary, teasing and resisting so that I would hold her down and claim her in a moment of frenzied excitement.

Now, having realized that she *wants, desires and needs* to be a “taken” wife, to be the genius twin-sister of my childhood crush, I have relented.

I sometimes adopt that chiding tone that Dick Sergeant used when she got carried away. I encourage her to throw herself at me as she loves to do. I bend her over, lie her back, compel her, melt her with a touch, overrule her for erotic effect, and even correct her with an occasional swat as she passes me.

If I had any doubts as to her willingness to fill this role, they would be dispelled by the fact that she learned to wiggle her nose at me, and mastered that way of saying “Well??” that is one of my earliest memories of something oddly-erotic in a wife.

She also promises to fetch me a riding-crop if she ever cuts her hair too short.

I still feel guilty when “using” my best and most respected friend to satisfy my most base desires. But this degreed and lettered friend—

this certified genius who has more than earned my admiration—is still a woman.

She is designed and built to my specific requirements, avowed to my life-long obedience, and takes great pleasure in arching herself to my pleasure.

She even serves me peanut-butter sandwiches on her great-aunt's best china.³⁸⁵

“JEOPARDIZED DAILY” (5 JUNE 2008)

For 20 plus years my husband suffered the consequences of my emotional barriers. There seemed no way around them, though he soldiered on in the current tradition of “kinder and gentler.” As my disdain and haughtiness increased, he would withdraw with a book, infuriating me. Until we discovered a Taken In Hand relationship, we were primarily emotionally disconnected. We use this interactive style to maintain our relationship, not so much to correct my “flaws.” My husband is intentionally maintaining our connection. This is the way it informally developed:

We use “watching Jeopardy” as the plausible exit strategy to separate from the rest of the family. We escape to the sanctuary of our locked bedroom and do actually watch Jeopardy. That is, most of the time he is watching Jeopardy. I can't see it so well from my position, which is frequently over his lap or the “original over one knee” position.

During the Jeopardy program he approaches me, in an intimate, sexual way. All the while he is looking

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for signs of resistance or control attempts on my part. In the past, I would give him negative feedback. "I'm not in the mood," "your approach is all wrong," etc. Now, if he senses any resistance or negativity, I will get spanked right then. If there is no obvious resistance, he usually will spank me in a playful way at frequent intervals, about every 30 minutes, still checking how my spirit responds. He may spank more firmly in a deliberate attempt to "provoke the dragon." If I take it well, he knows my spirit is connected with him. If I complain or in any way get critical of him, it will become a real spanking, with the hopeful goal of tears. I think it is safe to say that I am intentionally spanked and observed pretty much daily, or 6 days out of 7, and what he senses leads to varying degrees of intensity. This testing and observing of me seems to prevent an accumulation of internal small criticisms, which lead to emotional separation.

I've joked that "Jeopardy" has come to have a literal meaning. There is something about knowing that day he will be looking me in the eyes and observing my spirit that keeps me from getting too far off of the path. I feel slightly nervous when he comes home, because that is the first opportunity to be found out, if I have harbored negative thoughts. As the time approaches to watch Jeopardy, the nervousness increases: Did he catch the subtle dig? Was my tone abrupt when we went on our walk? Does he feel that today I would benefit from a serious spanking?

If something negative has transpired, "Jeopardy" is the likely time he will deal with it. Though it evolved casually, it is a near daily accountability session.

We have also expanded it to include accountability for health related issues, like diet and exercise, and time management goals. Jeopardy is the time I report my successes and failures and receive the consequences of each.³⁸⁶

"ENTITLED TO ALL OF HER HUSBAND" (11 JUNE 2008)

In retrospect, I've learned that my wife's desire to be taken in hand was driven by something she saw in my business relationships.

That something was my use of power. She was seeing me use emotional strength, in various forms, to get people to do things that I needed them to do. She was seeing me be a leader.

Yet, she was rarely—if ever—on the *receiving* end of that experience. That's not too surprising, since one's relationship with one's wife is very different from that with an employee, customer, supplier or other business associate.

On a day to day basis, a business owner, or company president, needs to get people to do things that they don't want to do. Employees and other suppliers want to get paid more for doing less. Customers want to pay less and get more for their money. Everyone wants to do things at a time of their own choosing.

The primary job of a leader is to compromise and negotiate all of

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those desires and focus them on the goal of the business. Sometimes compromise can be achieved though creativity (the famous win/win situation) but the problems that end up on a leader's desk are more often the ones that *can't* be resolved that way.

If they could have been resolved easily, they wouldn't have ended up on my desk.

Elle often saw me, or heard me, *tell* people to do things, or force them to make choices they didn't want to make, or apply pressure, or imply what would happen if they didn't do something.

Of course, there are a lot of other things that I do in my business, but Elle didn't find most of those other things erotic. She *did* find it erotic to see me compel people to action. It made her heart flutter to see me use power on other people.

She wanted that part of me, and I almost never gave it to her.

Of course I didn't. My wife isn't an employee. I'm not paying her to be my wife. She isn't a supplier or customer with whom I'm trying to negotiate a contract. I didn't see it as my right to direct her to do things, nor did I feel it was fair to pressure her to accept things she didn't want to accept.

In our marriage, my wife was my true partner, my true equal, and not someone on whom I would use power. If I asked her to do something that she didn't want to do, I might *influence* her, compromise with her, entice her or even seduce her.

However, *compelling* her to do things was, to me, not only *morally wrong*, it was offensive. Why would

the love of my life expect or even *want* me to use power or emotional force or strength on her?

The answer is in the nature of womanhood. You can find plenty of articles on this site written by women telling all about their desire to experience their husbands' strength and power. In fact, reading those articles over the past few years helped me to discover and understand that desire in my wife.

Still, that explains only her *desire* for my strength. It doesn't answer the moral questions: What *right* do I have to use that power on her? If I use my power on her, am I not taking advantage of her? Even if it satisfies her desire, do I have the right to do it?

No, it isn't necessary to trot out scripture or any other moral authority that says a husband has primacy over his wife. There is a much simpler answer—one that does not require women to submit to their husbands.

The simpler answer—and, to me, the more satisfying answer—is in *my wife's* right or *entitlement* to *all of me*. My leadership, my ability to use power and my strength are all part of me, and it all *belongs* to her.

We vowed, among other things, to share all that is to come. We promised to give our whole selves to each other, and if my wife sees something in me that she likes, she is entitled to have it.

She once asked, "Why won't you do that to me? Why won't you argue *with me*? Why won't you get angry *with me*?" At other times it's been, "Why won't you make me do things?" or the more central ques-

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tion, "Why can't I have that part of you?"

In my mind, the only reason anyone would put up with that part of me was because they were getting paid to, or because they wanted something from me and were willing to struggle with me to get it. It never occurred to me that someone might actually *want* that side of me just for the pleasure of it.

But once I understood her desire to feel my strength, and to have it used on her, I could not deny it to her.

It is part of me, I am her husband, and she is entitled to all of her husband.³⁸⁷

"THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE, BY BETTY FRIEDAN: A BOOK REVIEW" (13 JUNE 2008)

I've always avoided reading this book. I was aware that Ms Friedan had a low opinion of housewives, and since I am one myself (albeit a mediocre one) I didn't think there was likely to be much satisfaction in reading it. However, some recent discussions I have been involved in on the internet made me feel that it was about time I actually read the book.

I found it even worse than I had expected. The venomous contempt that Ms Friedan felt for women who were housewives is really beyond anything that I had imagined. The abuse she heaps on our heads would, if directed at any other group of people, have been considered positively libelous. Women who were housewives were, she reckoned, infantile, mentally arrest-

ed, weak, clinging, afraid to venture out into the real world (it goes without saying that the world of paid employment is 'real' and the world of the home is not).

Women were wasting their time at home because housework was so easy it could be done in an hour or so, leaving women with time for more important things. I.e. working at a job. Not just any job either, women must be doing something that will realise their full potential. She hasn't got a good word to say for men who are not in jobs that are exciting, creative and challenging either. a housewife who imagines she is doing something important is, she says, as deluded as the man who imagines he has made a car because he tightens the bolts on the assembly line. It doesn't seem to occur to Ms Friedan that we can't all be college professors, surgeons and high court judges. Somebody's got to tighten the bolts.

She blamed the useless, clinging housewife for the fact that the divorce rate was rising in the early 60s. She attributes this to the fact that men were sick of supporting their useless wives, and were dumping them. The only problem with this theory is that nowadays most wives work, but the divorce rate is not noticeably falling. She also blamed the housewife for juvenile delinquency, homosexuality, and child battering, none of which have noticeably decreased in recent decades either. Women who are emancipated and work outside the home don't batter their children, and they don't have sons who are homosexuals, or juvenile delinquents. And

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their husbands don't divorce them. So says Ms Friedan anyway, but the current state of affairs would seem to suggest otherwise.

Oh, and passive, submissive women (as most housewives were in her estimation) don't enjoy sex either. But at the same time, confusingly she complains about the sexually aggressive women who are hungry for affairs, and devour novels with lurid sex scenes their incessant demands. I found myself somewhat confused by these two conflicting images. Can housewives both be sex-hungry aggressors, and at the same time passive, submissive, and uninterested in sex? These two images seem to be somewhat at variance with each other, and I had trouble reconciling them. But Ms Friedan evidently didn't.

But then she, after all, was a college-educated career woman, and I'm just a zombified housewife—what would I know?³⁸⁸

"THE LONG JOURNEY TO TAKEN IN HAND" **(14 JUNE 2008)**

I grew up in a male-dominated family: where my father claimed the position of head of the household by right of the wedding vow made by my mother to "honor and obey" him. That was consent enough for him. While he took his responsibilities for the family quite seriously, he was also domineering and critical—ruling the family in a manner that would have us dreading his return home from work each day. While my mother dutifully ran the household to my father's specifications,

she was also bitter and depressed most of the time. Shortly after I moved out on my own, my parents drew up divorce papers for the third and final time, ending a long ordeal for everyone involved.

When I began to consider forming a family of my own, I vowed that I would never have the kind of marriage that my parents had. As a child of the 60's and 70's, I embraced the ideas of the feminist movement, and considered my young wife-to-be my equal in all respects. Why should either of us need to be the head of the household? After going through Shere Hite's *The Hite Report on Female Sexuality*, I extended this egalitarian attitude into the bedroom as well. Why should anyone need to dominate there, either? While I never had a problem being masculine or being a man out amongst 'the guys,' with my wife I was always much softer. I thought that was the way it was supposed to be: the old 'Leave it to Beaver' paradigm had been revised, right?

My wife and I have now been married for over 20 years, have four children, and to an outside observer, we would have seemed to be a nice, stable couple. However, all was not well, and as the years went by, our relationship slowly deteriorated. By the time our own oldest children were getting ready to leave home, my wife and I had reached the point where we each lived our own separate lives, interacted only as necessary, and even slept in separate bedrooms most of the time: and we were both unhappy, lonely, and resentful. I had threatened separation on a few occasions, but could

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never bring myself to go through with it while we still had children in the house.

Then, in the winter of 2007, a job change from one side of the country to the other forced us into a six-month long separation anyway, while I went to the new job and my wife stayed behind to sell the old house—and you all know what happened to the housing market that year. At first, the separation seemed like no big deal: we had been pretty much doing our own thing anyway, and it removed the nearly constant sexual tension between us that was present when we were together. As weeks stretched into months, however, I became depressed and passed through my own form of mid-life crisis, in which I recognized the pathetic state of my personal relationship with both my wife and children, and I understood that in order to be happy again, I either needed to fish or cut bait; that is, either put forward a genuine and sustained effort to rebuild my marriage or cut ties and seek my happiness elsewhere. I opted for the former.

This past summer we were finally reunited, and over the following several months we have made steady progress in rediscovering each other, rebuilding our friendship, and adding to the once scant list of things that we have in common. All those things that previous marriage counselors had encouraged me to do (such as more housework, spending quality time with the family, and courting & romancing my wife), but which I had always been too angry and resentful to do, I

found that I could now do, and often with pleasure.

Along the road to recovery, we have each had our fair share of epiphanies: moments when we finally *understood* something about each other that we had never truly 'gotten' previously. For my wife, the key moment occurred last fall, when she finally understood the vital connection between *physical intimacy* and *emotional intimacy* for a man. For myself, the key moment occurred this spring, when I finally understood the vital connection between being a **confident, masculine, and dominant male** and attracting the sexual interests of my wife. In a nutshell: it turns out that the man the feminists called for *on paper*, is not a man they would actually *want to sleep with*.

To say that this has been a life and marriage transforming realization would be an understatement. At this point, we are proceeding slowly and cautiously as we feel out untrodden territory, but we are already beginning to see positive signs of a happier, more secure relationship. For me, the change that I am undergoing is not a matter of discovering my **masculinity**, but one of *liberating* it within the context of my relationship with my wife. In similar fashion, the change that my wife is undergoing allows her to liberate her **femininity** within the context of our relationship. We both owe a great deal of thanks to the creators and contributors to Taken in Hand for such a great online resource: to find such a wonderful community of like-minded couples has been most reassuring to both of us.

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I also wish to express my deepest gratitude to my lovely, intelligent wife. By revealing what she has *really* wanted from me in our relationship for a very long time, she has granted me a wonderful gift, and demonstrated a level of love and trust that astounds me still. It is now my turn to honor that gift to the best of my ability. To be a bit tongue-in-cheek, this strong, feminine woman wants a strong, masculine man to push against --> and when she pushes, I had better not budge!³⁸⁹

"WHAT A MAN!" (18 JUNE 2008)

An incident happened last night that has made me feel like kneeling at my husband's feet in worship of his manliness. I don't know if others will understand my feelings about it because in a way it seems paradoxical.

What happened was that a gang of thugs came up to us on the street as we were waiting for the light to change so we could cross the road, demanded money from us, then threatened us and physically closed in on us while making further threats. One of the thugs, for example, assured my husband that he still has the scars from where he broke a knuckle smashing someone else's face, and that my husband might get the same treatment.

Instead of getting all macho and escalating the confrontation, my husband, at every turn, masterfully took the wind out of their sails by saying apparently very seriously rather than sarcastically, "I don't doubt it", "I'm sure you're right", "I

believe you." The thugs kept expecting my husband to match their threats, but instead, he did the opposite every time. When one of them jeered, "What? Are you SCARED?" my husband looked him straight in the eye and admitted in a non-threatening but loud voice that other passersby could hear, "Yes, I am scared."

This ostensibly weak answer completely flumoxed the thugs, and there was a hesitation before one of them said, "What? You're scared of me? I'm only 15. Why are you scared of a 15-year-old?" (He was a very big 15-year-old, if he was actually that age!)

Again, in a loud voice my husband replied, "Yes I am scared. I am quite sure you are stronger than I am, and I'm quite sure that you could hurt me."

At this point some passersby started laughing, and the thugs went silent, apparently unable to believe that my husband could possibly say what he said, and in a voice that would so clearly be heard by everyone around us all. Then one of the thugs seemed to change his mind about attacking us and started pulling the two closest to us away and the lights changed and we crossed the road walking away from them and they did not follow us.

The way my husband handled the situation was masterful. His approach completely confused them and took the wind out of their sails. The content of what he said appeared weak, and he did not appear to be being sarcastic, but the strength of his voice was strong, and his eye contact and body language,

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while designed to de-escalate, was strong. The disconnect between the ostensible weakness and the clear underlying strength clearly defused what could have been a very violent encounter. I feel so proud of my husband, so thankful for his amazing ability to keep us safe, and so admiring of his strength and manliness.

What my husband was actually worried about was that if they were to attack us, my husband would end up being the one arrested, because he would feel such a strong need to protect me that he might well have done some serious damage to one or more of the thugs, because with one against a gang, he would not have been able simply to block the attack, he would have had to actually hurt some of them. My husband has a great interest in MMA fighting and knows Muay Thai, Brazilian jiu-jitsu, wrestling and has professional training and experience in dealing with violent physical confrontations.

But even if my husband were not versed in professional fighting techniques, the way he handled the situation was masterful. I am soooooo impressed by the way he kept the thugs from actually punching us (one of them did raise his fist as if to punch my husband, while standing right next to us, physically in our space) using just the power of his mind and words and body language. He totally dominated and controlled the situation without any physical or verbal threats or unpleasant words or gestures of any kind. What a man! I feel my husband's intense masculinity and manliness sooooo strongly. What a lucky

wife I am to have such a MAN for a husband. I am so proud of him.³⁹⁰

"WATCH WHAT SHE DOES, NOT WHAT SHE SAYS" (18 JUNE 2008)

When I was in college, I was trying to make myself into a man who values equality in all spheres of his life, as women kept saying that they wanted men who agreed with their political views. In fact women would reject my advances if I did not mouth the correct platitudes. In a left-leaning college, if I did not overtly agree that men and women should be equal in the bedroom, that when a woman says "No" that never means "Nooo—not right now", if I did not agree that men are no different mentally, physiologically, or sexually from women, that men should be no more or less the providers of economic resources or child care to the family, and if I did not agree to an additional whole litany of feminist baggage, dating was not something I could look forward to. In other words, I felt I could not take charge and act as a kind and controlling presence in a relationship, since I had to verbally promise that I was not in any way like that.

When I complained about this to a lifelong friend he gave me very sage advice:

"Ignore what they (women) say. Watch what they *do*." He said that some women both say they want an egalitarian relationship and *act* as though they do. He told me not to go out with those women because there would be no compatibility.

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But he also told me that no matter how much many women think that they want full equality in a relationship, almost none of them actually do. He said that if I want to go out with a more traditional woman, watch how a woman behaves—how she responds to my traditional ethical take-charge male behavior—regardless of her radical feminist rhetoric. Don't argue with her when she describes how evil men are in our "patriarchal culture," but nevertheless do what I as a caring take-charge non-egalitarian-inclined man would do—open the door for her, pay the restaurant bill, and make sure she is safe when you walk her home through the dark streets.

He explained that women have an immensely powerful need to be seen to be equal to their man and right in any disagreement with their man and in their social context. If the current fashion at college is for women to be feminists (or socialists or whatever) that will usually be their stated position. Women with such views wish to be celebrated as politically correct and conform their views appropriately.

Men, on the other hand, have historically been more rebellious and independent thinking. Whereas women want to be seen to be right, and are more likely to want to fit in with their feminist peers, and may be more likely to conform in general, men tend to want to be *effective* (hopefully, in achieving what is right!).

In relationships, it is often the woman who points out that there is a sign posted that says that a foot-bridge is closed for repairs and

should therefore not be crossed, even if convenient for the family to cross it. It is often the man who is more daring, notices that the bridge is structurally sound, and it will benefit the family to cross if they just don't step on the freshly painted areas—the only repairs being made. Such a man may agree with his wife that the sign says they shouldn't cross, but he then quietly demonstrates what he thinks best by crossing the bridge, and his family follows his confident lead.

If the family were to be stopped by the police, the man would not have been *effective* in meeting the family's needs, and his decision to cross would have been the wrong one. But if the bridge crossing is helpful, he is admired by his wife for his minor daring and the family shares in the convenience.

My friend's point is really that as men we need to allow women to be seen to be "right" in what they say, in general not argue that much—but judge their true intent by what they *do* in response to traditional (ethical) male behavior. Then we must strive to make decisions that are effective in achieving what is right for the relationship and ultimately the family—which actually gives them what they really want, their stated wishes for an egalitarian feminist-inspired relationship notwithstanding.

Eventually the language of radical feminism disappears or diminishes as the relationship progresses, because the woman is in fact mistaken in thinking that she wants an egalitarian relationship in which man and woman provide precisely the

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same input financially and in every other way. What she says she wants, and what she acts as though she wants, are two different things, and we men need to be sensitive to that, while not hurting her pride by pointing out the discrepancy.

My friend wisely said that a man needs to be insightful enough and brave enough to understand her desires, though they may be much deeper than what is reflected in her overt language. I agree.

On a personal note, I am married to the finest taken-in-hand woman in the world. Yes, she made me breakfast in bed this very morning!

Although she was never a feminist, she used to be very opposed to marriage and even living in a couple relationship, and she used to say that men should not be in charge of a family, etc. etc.

And I used to not have the courage to see beyond the politically correct utterances of women.³⁹¹

"TAKEN IN HAND IS NOT FAIR BUT IT IS FUN - AND JUST" (27 JUNE 2008)

In discussions about fairness in Taken In Hand relationships, it seems posters sometimes confuse fairness with equivalency or justice.

It is *not* fair that my lovely woman (greatest gal on the planet!) follows my directions, but can't give *me* directions. She makes requests, that I consider. Usually she gets exactly what she asks for, sometimes she doesn't.

Nor is it fair *to me* that she isn't responsible for making decisions that I have to make all the time for *our*

mutual benefit, so she doesn't have to worry about those things.

I do listen to her, and discuss things with her, but when it comes down to significant decisions (and even not-so-significant decisions), I'm the one making the choices, easy or difficult. I also accept full responsibility for making those decisions and any consequences for them.

How is that fair to me? It's not. We're simply taking advantage of our strengths.

Mind, I'm not complaining about these things, I just don't look at it as being a fairness issue. Fairness requires one to count and tally things but a Taken In Hand relationship should not be like that. As I see it, a significant part of Taken In Hand is acknowledging that one person is to be the leader, and the other person will follow that lead (by force if necessary!). It's a matter of authority and power. I've seen plenty of relationships (and been in enough of them) to now recognize that many conflicts are about power, or who's leading in any given moment.

What Taken In Hand offers is a clear definition of who is the final authority, who is going to take responsibility for decisions that aren't easily made when such decisions would often involve conflict when discussed among peers attempting for consensus. I don't expect or look for consensus, but then we have an exceptional amount of trust. She knows I will listen to every one of her concerns, and do my best to address them as (I see fit) in my decisions. She *trusts* my decision making. She can express disappointment in my decisions, and we may discuss

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how my decisions affect that disappointment. But she doesn't second-guess my decisions — she trusts that I have her best interests at heart (that's a big responsibility for me).

Think about work...are the decisions your boss make always fair? No. They can't be, because someone will always not get what they wanted. Your boss's primary responsibility is to the business needs, not the individuals. Just as the husband's responsibility in Taken In Hand is to the relationship.

(And before anyone jumps on it...I know our relationships aren't the same as work, but the leadership aspect is applicable everywhere.)

Fair? I think not.

Just? As just as I can be.³⁹²

"HOW TO UNDERSTAND AND APPRECIATE A WOMAN" (28 JUNE 2008)

I am as saddened as the next man when hearing feminist rhetoric about the evil of men. However, I take exception when I see what looks like a dismissal of feminist concerns or portraying men to be more ethical or more right or more capable just because of their gender.

We live in a patriarchal culture and I see no point in arguing that fact. Male values, hierarchical and process-oriented approaches are revered in business and society. Women, bless them, so flexible and adaptable, have managed to not only succeed in our male-oriented culture, but even excel in it. They are a force to be reckoned with, to be respected if not feared, and we men have a choice to make: make allies of

them or enemies. Personally, I would much rather have a woman at my side than to face her in battle.

The slowness, the tardiness, of our culture to accept women for who they really are in business and leadership positions, has irreparably harmed all of us.

Emotional athletes and experts in relating, women are on the track of mastering male values and approaches to get ahead in our culture. Before long, the glass ceiling will be shattered by individuals exhibiting male aspects better than most men.

And I weep.

We don't need more men. We need our women; our wives, our mothers, our sisters, and our daughters. We need to acknowledge and utilize the feminine natural resource so eagerly available to us. We need the voice of reason, of pragmatism, of compassion, of nurture, that we are so sorely lacking today.

Women are the bedrock of civilization. Our patriarchal culture has accomplished wondrous things; we have planted footsteps on the moon, we built the Great Wall, we founded religions and whole nations. And nothing could have been accomplished without our women. We have been, and still are, standing on their shoulders.

In the tree of life, men are the branches, the outshoots, expendable gamblers that may or may not create value for society. Women, however, are the trunk and the roots. Each woman a priceless link in the great chain of mothers, nurturers, and creators. Each woman a doorway into the elemental feminine, our very connection to human society.

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I am not a feminist. My motives are purely selfish. The unencumbered female perspective is a resource that we have been discarding for too long. I dearly hope that our patriarchal culture sees and starts to appreciate this treasure sooner than later.

I am not a feminist; in fact, in my personal relationships I would best describe myself as a male chauvinist. I consider my lady's bottom and hair my personal property and those parts of her can never count on any periods of prolonged dignity. I deny her and compel her and treasure her and cherish her; she is mine and she belongs to me.

But that is the dynamics of a relationship between one man and one woman. I am only happy in a relationship when my lady surrenders to me and thrives on it. But in her professional life, she and her sisters deserves the respect and encouragement they have already earned. Neither the male nor the female approach is superior, but when they connect, when they intermingle, they are unbeatable.

We should be less concerned about what women say and do, and instead work on providing these wonderful creatures the men they truly deserve. You won't get her respect and admiration just because you are endowed with a Y chromosome. You have to earn her trust. Only when she feels safe with you will you receive the greatest validation a man can hope for: the trust, respect, and admiration of a good woman.

I acknowledge that women do seem irrational and paradoxical to many men. I assure you, however,

that appearances can be deceiving. Only if we dismiss women as small men that smell good can we infer male meaning on female communication. Women are deceptively similar to men on the surface but it would be foolish to assume that we approach our world the same.

A woman's brain is a massively parallel super-computer and there is no way to express the emotional currents in her heart in such a recent invention as language. Instead, look within you and let the elemental connection you feel with your lady to guide you. Take a leap of faith; she won't bite you. At least not hard.

Within you, the elemental masculine knows exactly how to connect with her elemental feminine in a way much, much older than language. She won't surrender to you until you have surrendered to yourself.

And when she surrenders to you, you have finally come home.³⁹³

"MY TREASURE" (30 JUNE 2008)

Not property but *treasure*...

There is a difference between the dynamics of a romantic relationship between one man and one woman, and how men and women act together to tame the world. Or the way I look at it: there are all the women in the world except one, and the last one, the most glorious of them all, is in my arms.

The one nestling in my arms is mine and she belongs to me. She approaches reality in different roles; when tackling the world, she is Woman, a link in the chain of Wom-

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en. And when not in my arms, I will be the wind beneath her wings, or her loudest cheerleader, or simply get out of her way. But when at the end of the day, when she snuggles into my arms, when I bury my face in her hair, she is my treasure and mine to cherish and use, mine to compel and deny.

Mine.³⁹⁴

"FREEDOM IN LETTING GO" (1 JULY 2008)

I remember one day when I was perhaps 7 years old. I had climbed up a tree and could not get down. I managed to maneuver myself part-way down but in the end I found myself hanging from my hands still quite a way up. I had no strength to get purchase for my feet and my arms were shaking from the strain. I finally decided that I would need to fall and I released my grip of the branch I was hanging from.

I will forever remember the sense of freedom and letting go as I felt the branch slipping from my grip; I had made the decision to let go, and even though I hit the ground and cracked my tailbone, I still only remember the immense sense of freedom for the heartbeat that I was falling.

I had let go and there was nothing else for me to do. There was no sense of worrying what would happen because it would happen no matter what I thought. There have been very few times in my life when I have felt so free.

From deep inside you I feel the craving for the same sense of freedom; where worries promise to be

vanquished, where purposes and goals are empty words; where your soul, like a leaf in the storm, whirls towards salvation at the end of the tunnel.

Let me cradle that leaf in my hands. Let me gently blow on it and laugh in delight as it whirls around my head. Let me be strong enough, vigilant enough, dependable enough, to keep it safe.

Yes, I remember the sense of freedom I glimpsed when I was a young boy.

I remember.

And still...

And still, I choose to stand tall in the storm, braving thunderous lightning and sleeting snow. I choose to take your hand in mine and keep you warm.

Because every time you smile at me I glimpse that freedom in your eyes.³⁹⁵

"AN UNEXPECTED BENEFIT OF OUR TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP" (17 JULY 2008)

When my wife and I first got married our relationship went through a rocky patch in which she seemed inordinately emotional to me, and to her I seemed explosively--and frighteningly--angry. She says I would blow up at the slightest problem, and from my perspective she was always upset and crying. It was a difficult time for us.

But my wife kept assuring me that she wanted a Taken In Hand relationship. She kept assuring me that she wanted me to be in control of her. She kept denying that she want-

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ed to be the one in control--and crying whenever I accused her of that.

I could not understand how a woman who was so sure she wanted a Taken In Hand relationship could be so untrusting, so insecure, so bossy, and she in turn could not understand how a man who wanted to be in control could be so angry.

My wife's fantasy Taken In Hand relationship was with a man like the one depicted in the article, "Do you have a commanding presence?" I could understand my wife wanting that, but that was not me. I tend to react. It doesn't take much to get me mad.

Or it didn't.

My wife remarked last week that I have changed. She asked me what has caused the change that I had not noticed had happened. But she is right. I have changed. These days I am less quick to anger, more calm, more assertive and more content. More calm.

I have my wife to thank for this. She was gentle with me when I blew up all those times early in our marriage. She accepted the unacceptable. She stayed when others would have fled, and with good reason. She and I would not say that I was an abusive husband, but I imagine many woman would. God has so blessed me with this wife. How did I get to be so lucky?

What my wife's constance and quiet reassurance has done for me is to keep me focused on the Taken In Hand marriage we both want. In being gentle with me even when I have not deserved it, my wife has given me the space to grow as a man and as her leader and husband.

At first I felt very angry and frustrated that my wife did not obey when I wanted her to. It did not immediately occur to me that I needed to change how I spoke to my wife, but time and experience and no doubt many hints from my wife taught me that what my wife best responded to was *calm assurance* and *firm but calm control*. My wife taught me that my anger did not produce the desired results. It made her afraid instead, and when a woman is afraid, she can't hear you, because she needs to protect herself from you. When a woman is feeling the need to protect herself from you, she can't obey you.

Make a woman feel SAFE and LOVED and there's nothing she won't do for you--nothing.

Our Taken In Hand relationship has taught me more and more how to be calmly assertive, because that is what really works with my wife.

But the unexpected benefit of this is a promotion at work. I am convinced that the reason I got a promotion was because I was and am more calmly assertive: where in the past I would have lost my cool I am keeping my cool, and that has been noticed.

I am finding many different parts of my life have improved since pursuing my Taken In Hand relationship with my wife. I think you're right to stress the *marriage* aspect of Taken In Hand--these positive changes in me have been since my wife and I got married, not before we were married. When you get married you sink or swim, you have to make it work, whereas if you are not married you don't need to ad-

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dress as many issues. Marriage is a commitment.³⁹⁶

"IS IT EVER OK TO FORCE YOUR WIFE TO DO SOMETHING?" (3 AUGUST 2008)

What should happen in a Taken In Hand marriage when it runs into a block wall of resistance on the woman's part? That is, when she is so clearly opposed to the man's orders that even punishment will not work; and it appears that there is no way she will comply unless the man forces her. Is a man in a Taken In Hand relationship ever justified in forcing his wife to do something that she is so vehemently opposed to?

Taken In Hand is a marriage where both parties feel happy and fulfilled. But it's also about the man's leadership and control; and in some couples that indeed means that the man has the final say in most things, or all. Ideally, a couple would not need to sacrifice either the wife's happiness or the man's control. But sometimes there are difficult or intractable issues. How does one balance the wife's happiness against the man's control, when the man makes a demand that his wife is very resistant or even resentful towards?

This question is hard to answer without knowing more details about the nature of the command in the particular case, and just why his wife is so opposed to it. The two of them need to discuss this thoroughly, if they have not already done that. But in general, Taken In Hand is about making *both* parties happy. If anything, the husband has an even greater responsibility than most men

do, to ensure that his wife is feeling happy and fulfilled under his leadership. That's what being the husband in a Taken In Hand marriage means: Not that the man gets whatever he wants, and the woman just has to put up with it; but that he is able to guide them both towards a happier, more loving, sexier, and more fulfilled relationship.

In some cases, it's possible that either the man or the woman is being unreasonable or uncompromising; or maybe even both. As a woman, I would want to feel not only happy in the relationship, but also safe, dominated, protected, respected, and appreciated. The man needs to exercise wisdom, caution, understanding and compassion in his leadership. The woman may have good reasons for her disobedience, and he should be willing to have a long talk and listen to her reasons, instead of just trying to bully her into something that he knows she is strongly opposed to. There may be some acceptable alternative: another way to accomplish the thing the man really desires, that does not involve the wife at all; or there may be some compromise that is acceptable to both of them.

(And please note that I'm not saying that it's always wrong for a man to bully a woman. Sometimes they both enjoy that, as part of a romantic game of dominance and surrender. In that case, it's usually not about something where the woman strongly objects, but something where she is putting up some token resistance, just to provoke him into getting more forceful with her. Women can be kind of tricky that way, so men

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need to be alert and perceptive as well, so they can understand just what is going on.)

In my view, the man should never try to force (or even command) his wife to do something that she strongly feels is: unsafe, illegal, unethical, dishonorable, or deeply repugnant to her. (And something that is clearly unhealthy would count as unsafe, in the long run.) It's usually pretty clear what's legal and what's not; the question of what's unsafe or unethical will probably require some discussion or even debate between the man and woman.

An example on the safety issue: Personally, I feel that I have a right not to ride in a car with someone whom I feel is not driving safely. Couples can and do have disputes on that, and perhaps some things are not as dangerous as I imagine. But when it comes to safety, I feel it's best to err on the side of caution, so both parties should feel like the driving is safe. But also realize that driving always carries risks, as does anything else in life. People may assess those risks very differently. If the husband were commanding his wife to drive 80 miles an hour, or tailgate, or run through red lights, then he is clearly the one in the wrong. But if the wife were to insist on driving so slowly that cars are piling up behind them and other drivers are getting angry and swerving around them, then she is probably overly fearful.

What can the man do when the woman is overly fearful in general, or has irrational fears about some particular thing? Again, it depends on just what it is. I happen to have arachnophobia, an irrational fear of

spiders, that I have no control over. I really dislike having this phobia, and I would love it if there was a good cure. But if a man decided to try and "cure" me of that phobia by tying me up and dropping spiders on my naked body, you can be quite sure that would end the relationship at the first spider. (If not my sanity and his life.) There is probably a way to work around specific phobias, to some extent. But when someone is excessively fearful in general, then it may require getting a therapist involved. Men in general seem more willing to take risks of a physical nature than women are; so it might be that they just need to find ways of accommodating both personalities. But if the man and wife are very badly mismatched from the start in terms of what they consider safe and acceptable versus unacceptably risky, then that may spell long-term trouble for the relationship.

A similar caution holds for what they might find unethical or dishonorable. (Honor and ethics being related but not identical. It's probably not strictly unethical to flip off another driver, or tell your aging grandma that you're annoyed at hearing her aches and pains, or relate scatological jokes at the family dinner table, or leave porn magazines on the living room coffee table. But all of those things are bad manners, and they can make someone seem like a less than honorable person. So honor is perhaps halfway between ethics and manners, and it concerns the important question of human dignity.) Here again, it helps a lot if the man and wife are well matched from the start, in terms of

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how they view ethics and dignity and manners. That does not mean they need to be identical, of course; and this is another area where there may be gender differences involved. For reasons known only to the Gods, most men find seem to find bathroom humor and slapstick much funnier than women do. On the other hand, a man will often be the first to rush in and rescue someone who is in danger, because heroism is part of the ideals of dignity and manhood for many men. (Well, the good ones, anyway.)

Perhaps the broadest and fuzziest area of dispute is in the issue of what people consider to be deeply repugnant. Women are often repulsed at finding the toilet seat left up, which puzzles men. That's a relatively minor dispute, and it could be resolved either way, in a hygienic manner. Many women are repulsed by pornography of any kind; and many men seem to find this puzzling, and feel their porn addiction is harmless. Sometimes the man will try to talk his wife into some sexual activities that he discovered in porn videos, and his wife will find this deeply repulsive to her, and be adamant in her refusal to cooperate. The man may take this as a personal rejection, and a sexual one; and if sex is very important to him, then he may feel his wife's rejection of some particular sexual activity as a rejection of him as a man. That is probably an unreasonable interpretation, as it's almost never the wife's intention. But knowing that men can feel that way can help the woman to be more sensitive to his feelings about it—provided

that he is also willing to be sensitive to her feelings.

The bottom line with sexual activities, I would say, is that it's not really good sex unless both people are enjoying it and finding it sexy. If the man coerces or manipulates his wife into accepting some sexual activity that she is not interested in, then he may as well be having sex with a blow-up doll. If he coerces her into engaging in some sex act that she really hates, then he is probably killing their marriage. That does not mean that he is a bad man for desiring this particular thing; nor is it unreasonable of him to want his wife to enjoy it too. (Assuming here that the activity in question is safe, and something that most people would not find repugnant. There are some fetishes out there that would make almost anyone gag.)

But the wife has a right to her feelings too; and if the husband repeatedly violates her feelings, especially in a sexual way, then that may backfire and the man may soon find that his wife is deeply repulsed by all sexual activities with him. It's probably best if the wife and husband both are willing to expand their erotic horizons and do a bit of sexual exploring with each other. But that does not guarantee that anyone will like what they explore; and with some things they may know full well they would hate it without even trying it. So it really all comes down to finding sexual expressions that both man and wife really enjoy. The rest will need to be relegated either to a solitary fantasy life, or perhaps even totally forsworn. Like all other important areas of compatibility in

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marriage, sexual compatibility is an issue that is best explored well before committing to the marriage.

Okay, so let's assume now that the thing that the husband is commanding his wife to do does not fall into one of those hard-line categories. That is: it's not unethical, nor unsafe, nor deeply repugnant, etc. It's just something where the wife has a huge amount of inner psychological resistance; and perhaps even resents the man for being so persistent in his demands. Maybe she feels that he's asking her to do something beyond her ability; something that she would find too difficult and arduous, and perhaps she also regards it as useless and pointless and a waste of time. From her viewpoint, he is perhaps being unreasonable in his demands; but here they should both realize that's a subjective judgment, and that they each have a right to their own ideas about what's worthwhile and what's not. Does the man's leadership in the Taken In Hand marriage mean that only his ideas count? No, I don't think so. Again, his leadership is about helping them both to feel happy and fulfilled.

So if his wife is an artist who needs several hours a day to draw and paint, and he insists that she should instead be spending all that time washing his socks and taking out the trash, and other chores—then he is not treating her with respect or appreciation. He is dismissing something that is very dear to her heart—namely, her art—and in doing so he is dismissing her as a human being. On the other hand, if she is a stay-at-home wife who has become so en-

grossed in her latest art project that she spends 18 hours a day at it—while the dishes pile up in the sink and the dust bunnies multiply on the floor—then the man may be well within his rights to demand that she needs to take better care of the house, and ration how much time she spends on her art. He may even be justified in setting goals for her to meet each day, or making her fill out a schedule, reporting how she spent her time and what she got done that day. If the wife refuses to accept his leadership even when it's clearly in their best interest, then I would question whether she is really interested in a Taken In Hand marriage at all; and maybe even whether she is even interested in keeping her husband.

Some other ways where the husband might intervene and make demands of the woman that she is not really happy about: insisting that she go on a diet and exercise program; or that she take responsibility for other mundane tasks, such as paying the bills and maintenance on the car. She might not enjoy doing any of these things; but they do need to get done, and someone has to do them. They just need to ensure that both parties have some free time for their own interests and hobbies, and soul commitments. There should always be an opportunity for the wife to discuss things with her husband, to give her viewpoint and her feedback, and to have that respected, considered, and taken seriously. But if they are in a Taken In Hand marriage, then the man will likely have the final word, after all is said and done. If he takes his leadership seri-

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ously, then he will strive to support his wife and her happiness, and her personal commitments. Sometimes his leadership means that it's wiser to do what his wife wants than what he wants, on some particular issue of importance to her. Being a strong leader means knowing when to compromise and when not to. If he views the Taken In Hand marriage as a chance to indulge and encourage his inner lout—by enforcing all of his own interests and desires while ignoring all of his wife's interests and desires—then that is not a Taken In Hand marriage. Indeed, it's not much of a marriage at all; and it's probably doomed.³⁹⁷

"FORGET 'IDEAL' - LOOK FOR THE REAL" (10 AUGUST 2008)

I was married to what I thought was an "ideal" man. He was married to what he thought was an "ideal" woman. While dating we both spent a lot of time being someone other than ourselves, and once we were married a few years and had a few kids, the "ideals" we were slowly gave way to who we were and surprise, we weren't wild about one another!

The person I am with now is not someone whom I originally saw as ideal in the beginning... and given the circumstances under which we met—he helped me change my flat tire in the rain, so I hardly looked or was acting my best LOL—I doubt he thought I was his ideal.

But today, I think when we wake up each morning, we know that we are ideal for each other. I am no

longer the svelte woman he met—but he revels in what he calls my "curvy" figure, and I get to cook and eat the things I—and he—loves! He tends to get testy when I don't do as he asks, but I revel in knowing that I am with an intelligent man who only asks me to do what is best for our family.

I love the possessive nature of my husband. I love the freedoms I have with him, knowing that although I am the boss and totally responsible at work, that I don't have to be the boss at home.

We have enough trust in each other to share our desires and dreams. I was comfortable enough with him to tell him I didn't want to be in charge at home (been there, done that with the ex and it was exhausting!). He was comfortable enough to tell me that he really wanted an old-fashioned woman who was strong and intelligent, but not always trying to be in charge. So we got what we wanted by looking past the "ideal" and into the "real".

We are not perfect. We have our moments. But all in all, I am glad that I stopped looking for the "ideal" man and I am really glad that my husband stopped looking for the "ideal" woman. If we had kept looking for the "ideal", we would have never found one another. Sometimes the "ideal" is not what is ideal for you.³⁹⁸

"SOME ADVICE FOR MEN SEEKING A WOMAN" (13 AUGUST 2008)

I think most women, not all but most, seek a man who understands

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that family is not a social event and that the responsibility of it is on both partners 24/7. There will always be good times and bad. There will be laughter and tears. But if there is trust and love, respect and accountability (by both partners), then there will be a lifetime spent with someone that is friend as well as lover and few if any regrets.

If you men think the feminist movement has tied your hands in the way you feel you have to deal with women, you should be in our shoes. I did not have a say in the feminist point of view, yet I am affected by it daily. I am a RN and have either to deal with the "I am God" doctor personality, or "You're a woman, you should be able to do it as well as any man" type. I was raised a lady, expect men to be polite, open my doors, escort me to my car or front door. There is just something highly unappealing in a man pulling up to the curb and honking for me to join him. Call me old-fashioned if you want, but to me it is a total lack of respect or caring to see our teenage girls today put up with that. I do not like to impose on men, but I always tell one thank you if they do something as casual as open a door for me, even if I am perfectly capable of doing so myself. It is a gesture of respect to me as a woman. It is an alpha male doing something for someone he does not see as inferior, but in need of some sign of caring from him, even if we are perfect strangers.

Many of us from the 60's/70's era, have conflicting views on what roles are male and female. Yes many of us girls went to college not because we

wanted to but because it was expected. Many of us tried to be the super mom/professional/wife that all the ads of that day said we should be. I still think some men had a hard time making those up to rub the impossibility of it in the feminists' noses. As you and so many others of the men who respond and write, most of us females are tired of trying to fit the all or nothing profiles men seem to think we want. Most of us are loving, caring, individuals that seek companionship and guidance from the men in our lives. We do not always want to be equal, but we will insist on being partners. Yes most of us may be professionals, but does that mean we do not like to be feminine, having the big strong male for a mate, a man who sometimes insists on things his way? Absolutely not.

To you hunting men out there, take my advice. Keep looking. You will find the right woman, but like a diamond in the rough, you will need to do a bit of precision cutting and polishing to find her. We are much more restricted in how we act and what we are allowed to say. If we desire a strong man who takes charge in our relationship, we are seen as weak. If we do not have equality (and here I mean complete equality), we are seen as ignorant or stupid. It is difficult for a man to navigate the waters that have come up from the flood of feminism. It is near impossible for the woman. So I encourage and urge you men to learn to listen to your instincts. Watch how we act, listen to the meanings between the lines when we speak. Even read our books. They are written by women for the

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most part and if there were not so many of us like minded, do you really think they would sell so many of them?

Finally, I urge you to be honest with us. Most of us can take most things as long as there is truth between partners. Most of us male or female have been in a relationship where honesty was absent. It is the most damaging of all to a relationship and by being up-front early on in your relationship, you will find most of us ladies are longing for your type of man.³⁹⁹

"IS DISCIPLINE A NECESSARY COMPONENT OF A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP?" (2 SEPTEMBER 2008)

I'm looking for someone to take care of me, I want my husband to "wear the trousers", be in charge. But I want that he's sincerely ready to work with me to find solutions that will suit everybody (I know sometimes it can't but I think it's worthy trying) I want to be completely involved in the decision-making process. I also want that each partner gets to decide in areas he/she's better at, so the husband would let the wife manage the areas she's better at and so would do the wife. The wife would admit that in general, the power of decision goes to the husband: she accepts he's in charge. But the husband would admit that for some issues, his wife is as able as him or better able than him to get things in order, and then he would let the wife take care or, would ask her to take care.

If I'm crossing limits, I'm expecting my husband not to let it go or run away, but to face it by means such as giving me a grave stern look and demanding that I "stop this behaviour this instant". Then when we're both in better mood, would come the time to discuss the issue. Same thing if he's the one crossing limits.

As for the stress or frustration, even angst, coming out of those moments where one has crossed a limit, I'd like that once we've discussed the issue, we find a way we both would enjoy/agree to let it go definitely. Like both playing against each other at Playstation, or going out and throwing snow at each other. So we don't deal with it alone in a corner, but together.

Would you say that this idea of a relationship is one possible kind of Taken In Hand relationship or would you say it is a conventional relationship? I don't think that it's an EQUAL relationship because there is someone who is entitled the power to lead. But it doesn't involve 'discipline'.⁴⁰⁰

"FIERCE WOMEN" (15 SEPTEMBER 2008)

I was watching a woman last night, in a restaurant with her husband and 2 children, one a tiny baby, the other a little girl about 5. They were a young couple, I would say in their late 20's. I saw the mother had already "changed" into her role from the girl he had married. The husband, for the most part, seemed connected to his family, children, and wife. She, on the other

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hand, had taken up the mantle of "mother", and didn't seem to connect to her husband as a woman.

This was just one little snippet out of their day, so it would be hard to say this is how they live their everyday lives. But I have seen this, as a wife and mother myself. Women become fierce. They have to, for the most part. If they are stay at home mothers, they are mostly responsible for what their children do all day. The bulk of parenthood falls to them, and when school starts, if you are not standing up for your child, worrying, guiding, prodding, they flounder. So when your husband gets home, you are or have already, fought battles for your children all day. Taken on the role of head of the household, even if that's not who you are or want to be. You HAVE to do it.

I am a woman, in my core, who wants to be controlled, in my heart of hearts. And when this role was handed to me, to be "mother", I changed. Not inside, not ever. Add to the fact that I had a child with not clearly visible special needs. But that is another story. What I am trying, probably not very well, to say is....this can and does happen to most women. Thrust into making most of the daily decisions, the safety of having a man who is head of the household vanishes. At least for me.

For a woman who needs a Taken In Hand marriage/life relationship being a mother is a hard role to put away when he comes through the door at the end of the day. How easy is it to just carry on as you have all day. Order the kids around, order

the husband around. Even if the husband started out as the head of the household, unless he is very strong, and takes charge, she will run right over him. And as years go by, how easy is it for him to give in, to let her run everything, shutting themselves off to one another. The girl he married, gone, swallowed up by responsibilities, work (both in the home and in the outside world).

She now feels alone. No one to catch her should she stumble, everyone looks to her for answers, for their day to day existence. When all she wants is to look up to her husband, have him lead, and for me, to be controlled by him. Joyfully, as a woman. To look in the mirror and still see "female", not some vague creature I don't recognize. I figure I have gotten off the main track here, and slid into describing my life. I am sorry. I hope, I got my point across anyway. As Scarlet said "Tomorrow IS another day." Hope springs eternal.⁴⁰¹

"FROM EXHAUSTED SINGLE MOTHER TO HAPPY TAKEN IN HAND WIFE" (5 OCTOBER 2008)

I am a very independent, intelligent and business-accomplished woman. Being divorced with young children forced me to take on the role of mother, father and breadwinner. Although I was surviving, and on the outside I presented a happy face, I was not happy. I was simply exhausted from doing everything alone, from having every ounce of responsibility myself and of worrying about my children in the

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middle of the night with no one to speak to.

One evening, in the rain, S offered to change a tire—as he said any gentleman should do, and we have been together ever since.

From the beginning of our relationship I knew that S was an old-fashioned type of man, opening doors, being extra polite, etc. I loved those habits that made me feel special. What I also loved was that he listened to what I said, we talked about our lives, dreams, and fears. As time went on, S would stop by while I was out of town and the kids were with their dad and cut my grass, or clean out the garage, or make dinners and leave them in my fridge with a note that said, 'No one should have to work as hard as you do—I hope the dinners give you a little free time'. (I still have the notes—13+ years later!). He did all this without me ever asking him to. And he did all these things without expecting anything in return. That's how I know he was listening to me, because all those things he did—big or small—were things that he and I talked about at one point or another.

One day I asked why he did those things for me, and he told me it was because he could see how capable I was of juggling my and my children's lives, but he could also see how tired I was—and he wanted to take care of me—to do something to give me a little rest. A few weeks later we were engaged.

When we married, we decided to live a 'traditional' relationship with him leading. I don't think it was because I thought this way was best—I didn't give it much thought.

It was because I was EXHAUSTED and very happy to share the work of life with anyone who asked!!!! I was thrilled to have him make decisions for us. I was thrilled that he paid the bills. I was thrilled that he and the kids took care of the yard, the cars and all the sports stuff in the garage. I was thrilled that he watched out for my health and would tell me to walk a bit every day. I was thrilled that he would do things just for me, just to make me happy! I was thrilled to be able to have some rest—mental and physical—from the draining job of raising children alone. The bottom line for me was we fell into this Taken In Hand relationship because I saw all the benefits.

Today, after many years of marriage, we still have a Taken In Hand relationship. Over time I have 'tested the limits' of my husband's patience and strength and each time he has responded by taking me in hand. I have at times (after our child was born) questioned his decisions and wondered if I am just being controlled because I am too mentally lazy in our home life to give issues a lot of thought. But what I discovered is that I enjoy his leadership, and in my marriage, I am always safe, so I don't do a lot of unnecessary worrying. I also found that I have no desire to be in control. My husband relishes control. So for us, this works just fine.

And finally, I have found that I respond quite well to S's controlling nature, to his protectiveness of me and our children, that because I don't have to be responsible for everything, I have time to be me. This

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life for us is easy – not perfect, but it is definitely easy.

Both S and I came from 'equal' relationships with lots of negativity – but had no good way to deal with it. Our traditional marriage with him leading may not be equal, but it certainly is equitable. S sets limits and a few rules that are good for us. He has our best interest at heart – I know that, so it is easy to 'get with the program' – plus after 10 years, he has not been wrong very often in his judgements and when he is wrong, he apologizes – (the sign of a strong man)!

I think the reason I have evolved into a Taken In Hand wife/advocate (LOL) is that I see this as a way where each person can use his or her strength to build a relationship based upon love, honesty and respect. It is also a relationship where neither person needs to be overwhelmed by 'doing it all alone'.

Now we certainly have 'our days' and I have my times when I am too resistant, but gentle or not so gentle reminders always seem to bring me back into line. I've come to see my husband's rules not as bossiness that I am putting up with, but as a constant reminder of how much he cares for me. What could be more perfect than that?

By the way, when I asked S what he gets out of our marriage, he said, he gets a loving, adoring wife, sex whenever he wants, happy kids, and the peaceful home that results from him leading and controlling me. He finished his comment off with the following statement "I guess it boils down to I get a happy wife, and a happy wife means a happy life".

A Happy and NOT Exhausted
Taken In Hand Wife...⁴⁰²

"CONTROL YOURSELF AND KEEP YOUR LEGS CLOSED!" (21 NOVEMBER 2008)

Before I found this site my life was a mess. My first mistake was I wanted a man that would treat me good and I assumed that meant we'd be equal in the relationship, neither one of us in charge. I didn't feel like it would be good for me to let the guy control me. I rejected men that tried to take charge and kept finding I didn't like the ones that didn't want to wear the pants. When I found this site it was the right time for me to be open to a new idea.

Even after finding this site and waking up to the idea that I wanted to be with a guy that would be in control I still got used many times until I got it that the right man wouldn't be a selfish jerk that would expect me to mommy him and be the source of his personal gratification. I felt like hey, he wants to be in control, that's the guy for me..... except I kept getting Peter Pans that wanted a Wendy to mommy them. There's a lot of dominant guys out there that are Peter Pans that think your purpose is to cater to their whims and ask nothing in return.

I kept reading this site and reading how men on this site put their wife first and cherish her feelings and I would wonder if men like that exist in the real world because all I met were the selfish jerks. I kept getting seduced by user losers then I would wonder where the guy had disappeared to. They'd got what they

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wanted and were on to the next woman, leaving me in pieces. I know some women can f--- like a guy but when a guy would have sex with me I would feel bad when he wouldn't want to see me again or if he wanted to be friends and have sex but not be in a relationship. This site and a book that was discussed here [was it *Getting to" I do"*, by Patricia Allen?—Editor] helped me get it that if I wanted to get married I had to close my legs and take care of my feelings.

The more I read this site the more I got it: a good guy would take care of a woman's feelings and treat her like a princess as well as wearing the pants in the relationship. You don't have to settle for a selfish jerk to get a guy that will be in control. There are guys out there that both want to wear the pants and will treat you good.

Well.... now I'm married to a great guy that treats me like a princess! My guy tried to get his magic wand in on our second date but finally--FINALLY--I ignored my hormones and succeeded in keeping my legs closed. I made sure to tell him how I felt flattered he wanted me and that I wanted him but wanted to wait. I was so proud of myself and it worked. We dated and he proposed and we got married 16 months later. Since we got married we've made up for lost time--our sex life is the best ever. One thing I never knew before was how good sex can be when you're married. I'm having the best sex of my life now--and my husband says it's the same for him. We're so happy. My husband treats me

soooooo good! THANK YOU TAKEN IN HAND!⁴⁰³

"IF YOU WANT YOUR WIFE TO GIVE YOU RESPECT, GIVE HER LOVE" (22 NOVEMBER 2008)

Warner on Emerson Eggerich's book. Men crave respect. Women are more likely to be concerned about whether they are loved. If you ask a businessman whether he wants to be liked by his associates and competitors, or respected by them, he will invariably tell you that he wants the respect. Many fights in marriages occur because a man feels disrespected by his wife. This is the theme of a book by Emerson Eggerichs called *Love and Respect*.

Good men in general, but Taken In Hand men in particular, feel very responsible for the happiness and welfare of their families. If a woman is sad or worried about something, what she usually wants is reassurance and love from her man. Unfortunately if a husband is not careful, he will fail to interpret his wife's sadness, irritability, or withdrawal as a need for more love, which is actually her request; instead, he experiences these things as criticism of him. He may even respond with anger and hurt her feelings even more. How can this happen?

Remember, a man feels responsible for the welfare of his family. If she feels bad, then he feels responsible. So if she feels bad, he feels blamed. And if he feels blamed, he feels disrespected. And when he feels disrespected, he responds with anger.

And naturally, when he becomes angry, she feels more unloved. And the downward cycle continues.

So what is a Taken In Hand man to do?

He needs to interrupt the cycle. As hard as it is, a woman who is sad, worried, upset or even angry is most likely feeling unloved. She wants attention. This attention can be a spanking, a love-making session, praise, or even a hug etc.

It may take a minute or two for the man to compose himself. This is critical. Just a few minutes by himself is important, even if she wants immediate interaction and results. A man in a Taken In Hand marriage is thoughtful and reflective. He does not act in haste. He must do what is best.

What feels like criticism (or *is* criticism from his wife) may make him angry, but he must retain control of himself. He needs first to compose himself. But when he does, he must take his wife in hand. His attention makes her feel loved. Hug her. Wallop her. Take her.

But whatever you do, demand obedience from her.

Her immediate response to his commands, demonstrates respect for him. And her respect reinforces his attentions. His attentions make her feel loved. When feeling loved, she feels better. And criticizes less, making him feel respected, etc.

Remember: you need to show your wife love by giving her attention. She will then show you respect by obeying you. Take her in hand. She will feel loved. She will obey. And you will get the respect you crave.⁴⁰⁴

"CHOICE THEORY SAVED MY MARRIAGE" (23 NOVEMBER 2008)

I have been a big fan of William Glasser, MD for several years. He is the creator of *Choice Theory* and he has written many books on this subject for over 50 years.

I went to an all day seminar with my late husband back some years ago in which Dr. Glasser talked about his latest book and educated his audience about Choice Theory.

I loved the concepts so much that I did another four-day training. Basically, Choice Theory says that the only person whose behavior I can control is my own. I realized that I had been trying to control my husband for a long time. Once I worked on letting go of controlling his behavior and focused on my own, things got better between us.

We were not in a bad way before, but I noticed he was much more relaxed when I wasn't doing those annoying things I was doing before (which were most of the Seven Deadly Habits of External Control: criticizing, blaming, nagging, complaining, threatening, punishing, and rewarding/bribing to control). I didn't get it perfect, but I kept working at it.

I teach Choice Theory and incorporate it into the work that I do. It's not Taken in Hand per se, however, I think Choice Theory fits in nicely with this way of living a marriage. It's actually very freeing to stop trying to fix someone else and take care of improving your own behavior. Believe me, I have enough work to

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do on myself without trying to mold someone else.

Lately I have been recommending *The Surrendered Wife* to my clients and to my friends. Laura Doyle doesn't realize this, but her book, in my opinion, is what I've come to call "Choice Theory for Women."

So many of the people I work with just cannot understand why they cannot fix their spouses. The idea is outside of their range of experience. So many of them are women, but not all of them! Many of them grew up with a dominant mother, who subsequently divorced their father and remarried repeatedly.

I cannot give enough praise to Dr. Glasser. He is my hero and I know I had a happy marriage because of embracing Choice Theory. I also believe that I will have a happy marriage with my beau because of what I have learned. Choice Theory, plus my letting go and deciding I want to live a Taken in Hand marriage, has been so freeing for me!⁴⁰⁵

"CAN YOU PROTECT HER, CHERISH HER AND HANDLE HER?" (10 FEBRUARY 2009)

Well over forty years ago, my wife engineered our first date while a teenager. Coming from several generations of college-educated women, she let me know that she was not the stay-at-home type.

Nor was she content with a mere undergraduate degree. Both bright and ambitious, she charted her own course. She wanted a man able to share her vision.

Yet, underneath it all, she needed someone to quite literally take her in hand. As a result, she turned down young men willing to worship the ground on which she walked and, instead, chose the man finally willing to put her over his lap!

I have written the above to make a few salient points.

First, women choose men—not the other way around. Part of that expectation is that a man be able to handle her.

It is not so much a conscious *choice* as a biological drive linked to survival of the species. For if a man cannot tame the beast that is within her, odds are that he will not have the courage to protect her or their children.

Second, women test. It is in their nature. They have to make sure that they have made the right choice of mate. Again, this is a self-protective mechanism.

The more unsure a woman is of male prowess, the more likely she is to test. If the man continues to fall short of her expectations, she will come to loathe him. This creates marriages made in hell. Because if the woman is not happy, no one around her is going to be happy!

Third, the wise husband does nothing to undermine his wife. Talk to women in successful taken in hand relationships and they tend to say something like ninety or ninety-five percent of the time their husbands are incredibly supportive, considerate, affectionate, and kind. On the other hand, when he says, "No," he means it!

I still open doors for my wife and seat her in restaurants. Sometimes,

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she will hang onto me like a teenager. I know there are times when people think that we are dating.

The truth is that women want men to win. Strong men—not tyrants—give a woman security. A woman must know that the man she has chosen is able to protect her, handle her, and cherish her. Knowing when to fulfill each of those roles comes in knowing the woman.

The supposed mystique of women is not that difficult to fathom. Women tend to be more alike than they will ever admit. Nevertheless, it takes patience to understand women. This is often not the province of impatient novices. The old truism is that men expect too much too soon and give too little too late. It is not a recipe for a successful relationship. Such husbands become relegated to that often-despised category of first boyfriends—unable to see beyond what they want rather than what a woman needs.

Given time, a woman will all but tell a man how to handle her. It is up to the man not only to listen with his ears, but also with his mind, heart, and instincts. To add to the lines of an old Kenny Rogers song, a man needs to know when to hold his cards, when to fold his hand, and when to lay his cards on the table.⁴⁰⁶

“WHAT IF HE IS HORRIFIED BY THE IDEA?” (20 APRIL 2009)

After the breakup of my 15 year marriage to a wonderful but completely non-dominant man, I was NOT actively seeking a man to be with. Well, he found me anyway. lol.

I love my boyfriend with my whole heart and he is an extremely take-charge man, so I showed him this website with the hopes that he would eagerly embrace this as all of his past relationships were broken off because he was too controlling.

Well, much to my surprise, he was absolutely horrified by it. After being told by all of the women in his past that his thinking was wrong, he couldn't understand how my thinking could be so absolutely opposite of theirs. And strike a woman??? Never in a million years and how did I think that that could ever be right, and did I think he was an abuser?

Now hindsight is 20/20 and I realize that I probably shouldn't have blasted him with the “punishment” concept quite so bluntly—and I know “punishment” is not for every Taken In Hand couple—but I ached for this, so in my eagerness to get what I wanted I had forged ahead, both barrels blazing, without thinking.

After a few weeks of discussing the difference between spanking a naughty 5 yr old and discipline a woman* who yearns to be “punished”, I gave up on the direct route. Instead I started actively embracing his “controlling” behavior. I started telling him my plans for the whole day, including approximate times, every day. I put his work schedule on all of my calendars and made sure that he knew that I did it so that I could work my plans and events around him. I started checking in

* “Being taken in hand is hot!” 25 November 2003.

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without his asking me to. If my plans changed for the day I immediately called him and told him. I started asking if I could do social things with my friends instead of informing him that I was. When I paid bills, I asked him to sit down with me to make sure I was managing my money the most economically.

I did all of this gradually over a period of about 6 months. I *wanted* to check in with him, so I did. I *wanted* his permission to do social things with my friends, so I started asking. I *wanted* him to know exactly where I was at all times, so I told him. Basically what I did was show him how I wanted things to be, and he was at once captivated and freaked. I was informed on a few occasions that he had never asked me to do "that". To which I would reply "Nope, you didn't. It just makes me feel better to do it." All I was doing was following my heart. I craved that kind of control so I took the initiative and placed the power in his very capable hands.

Now as is expected because we are all human, I messed up on occasion. One quite spectacular one was when I visited a girlfriend to play cards for an evening and I forgot my cell phone in the car. I wasn't there for more than an hour when her house phone rang. I was informed that I had forgotten my phone and would I please rectify the situation. Oh yes, and that we would discuss it when I got home. I was absolutely thrilled. No it didn't lead to a spanking, but I find that being made to kneel between his feet while he sits on the

couch discussing it with me was almost as effective. Lol

So I got my taken in hand relationship, which I absolutely love, with the man of my dreams. I'm still trying to figure out how to have him be able to access the vast resources here without it shaking him as badly, but at the end of the day he's not stupid. I think he will figure it out.

****grins happily****⁴⁰⁷

"HOW TO AVOID MAKING YOUR LIFE WITH YOUR WIFE A LIVING HELL" (10 JUNE 2009)

The biggest problem that I have encountered over the decades in understanding Taken in Hand has been the failure of men to comprehend that women have two natures.

To understand the dual nature of a woman, one might begin by reading the children's tale of Saint George and the Dragon with the insight that the dragon and the maiden are one in same creature. Thus, if the knight in shining armor fails to slay the dragon, this aspect of a woman's personality will, most likely, become the dominant persona in the relationship.

Women really do understand their duality much better than do men. It is part of their mystique. They also have a very keen understanding of what it takes to slay the Dragon Lady within that beguiling façade.

In today's world, one need not search diligently to find dragon ladies. These most unfeminine creatures seem to be everywhere. Usually, they leave a string of wrecked

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relationships in their path as they move from one calamity to another.

Another problem encountered by most men in today's superficial and fast-paced society is that they often lack the insight necessary to understand why some marriages are rock-solid, while others crumble like sandcastles at high tide.

A few weeks ago, my wife and I had an impromptu conversation with a woman young enough to be our daughter. Apparently intrigued by how my wife and I interacted, she asked us how long we had been married.

When we told her how long we had been together, she was obviously shocked. She signed, "They don't build marriages like that any more." I assured her that marriages can still be built the old-fashioned way, to last.

In response, the young woman admitted that she had been through *three* rotten marriages—as well as several boyfriends in between. She freely added that she had a reputation of being hard on men.

Real problems develop when a man does not know how to handle a difficult woman. To be sure, while some men can become tyrants, a more common problem is timid men. Despite propaganda to the contrary, women still despise weak men.

In truth, nature did not intend men and women to live in promiscuous and transient relationships. Nature is not a neutral; she has an agenda.

While not everyone should have children, the intent of Taken in Hand relationships is to produce a

stable environment in which to raise viable offspring.

It is also important to understand that this strategy has been going on for so long, that it is probably embedded in the interaction of the genes.

The above interaction may explain why, when the right man comes along, even a strong-willed woman develops an irrational urge to be taken in hand. As was the case with my future wife, it has happened to teenage virgins as well as to women with a failed marriage or two in their past.

An equally important component in the failure of men to come to grips with reality is often politically correct brainwashing. The propaganda often causes men to think that they should never 'hit' a woman.

Women know they can be hit and, if a man listens, women will all but tell a man exactly where—if not when. Part of the misunderstanding of the intrinsic difference between men and women results from misguided social engineers creating a legal menagerie in which verbal abuse is permitted while any 'unwanted touching' is treated as an unpardonable transgression. Again, women know better.

Privately, most women admit there are those times when they need to be taken in hand. Sometimes, they will state it quite explicitly. More often, there are indirect references.

As one professional woman recently told me, again after she found out how long my wife and I had been married, "I'll bet you can be *very* persuasive!" The inflection of

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her voice left little doubt what she meant.

Consequently, it is important for men to understand that, if they listen carefully, a woman will tell a man everything he needs to know about taking her in hand. Believe it or not, a woman in love wants the love of her life to take charge, as my wife calls it.

There are no deep-dark secrets to Taken in Hand. All the woman wants to know is whether or not she is important enough for him to care enough to take her in hand when needed.

Despite any testing—and women do test men to assure themselves of the man's resolve—a woman needs to know that the man will be there for her when she needs him to either slay her dragon or otherwise protect her. That is why a woman's repudiation of a weak man is far more visceral than it is cerebral.

Fourth, it is important to understand that men and women make their relationships. Nothing is handed to them. They must work at it.

One of the dumbest mistakes that a man can make is in failing to listen to what a woman is really telling him about love and life. Women don't bring up the Taken in Hand topic unless they are really interested in a guy *and* they expect him to act on their expectation.

Wise men listen. Wiser men act on what they have heard. Only a fool says, "No!" to both nature and woman. Then, many men have turned their life into a living hell by not raising their hand when they should have taken their wives in hand and spanked them.⁴⁰⁸

"TAKEN IN HAND AS OPPOSED TO COMPLETELY DOCILE" (13 JUNE 2009)

The expression 'Taken In Hand' implies that a woman may need to be actively controlled from time to time, and won't always be completely docile and compliant.

A woman may love a man, and want him to be in control, but won't necessarily be a complete pushover. She may sometimes be resistant. She may sometimes be irritable, sulky, bad-tempered etc. She may react sulkily when told off about something (I mean 'I' rather than 'she' in this case). A man who gives up at the first sign of resistance won't go far with most Taken In Hand inclined women.

I, for instance, fully intended when we started this, to be cheerfully compliant with all my husband's wishes in domestic matters, never to neglect the housework, always to tidy up, never to argue when he told me to do something etc. However, I found it did not work out quite like that in real life, and I have often found myself being resistant despite my intentions. My husband, however, does not have any trouble coping with this, and I usually cave in pretty quickly once he starts cracking the whip. If he was not prepared to do this, and just lost interest at the first sign of resistance, we would not have got very far.⁴⁰⁹

"ADVICE FOR HUSBANDS BEGINNING TO TAKE CHARGE IN THEIR MARRIAGE" (1 JULY 2009)

When a man begins a Taken In Hand relationship, he often has many questions. How to begin; how to think about taking charge of his wife; what his attitude should be. As a man in the happy position of being in a Taken In Hand marriage with a few years under my belt, here is some advice for men just beginning:

1. Assuming your wife wants a Taken In Hand relationship, imagine that your wife were happily obeying you. What would you be doing then, if she had already accepted your control? Then do that now, even before the relationship has fully developed. What you are imagining is what could be, and your optimism brings about your vision. By assuming you are in control, you bring about the assumption of control.

2. What were you doing the last time she was doing what you would have wanted her to do? Notice that, think about it, then do what you were doing and recreate your authority.

3. Think about your family as a unit. Make sure your role takes more work than anyone else's. Then fulfill your role with gusto and joy. Believe that your wife will follow your lead, and be willing to correct her when she doesn't. A few screams from a solid spanking, early on, can prevent a world of hurting later.

4. Think with pride how wonderful your family and your woman are. Ignore minor faults and richly praise attributes. A woman who will follow you has given you a wonderful compliment. A worthy woman follows a worthy man.

5. Think about doing much more together than you expect. Go shopping with her. If you are to be the leader at the grocery store, but know nothing about vegetables, lead her with your good cheer and your gentle teasing and joking. Dance publicly with her in the grocery store to celebrate your romance.

6. Think carefully and honor your children. You and your wife have chosen a Taken In Hand relationship. Your children's preferences, now or in the future, may not be yours. Your leadership of them occurs because of the smiles and decent behavior you bring to them.

7. Think about your spirituality and your obligations to G-d and others. If you are not religious, lead your family into good works and charity for others, for the sake of healing the world. Charity begins with your family, but does not end there.

8. Creatively dominate in the sex act, but make sure she is fulfilled.

9. Think about giving your wife space when she needs it. Indeed, insist that she ask for it if she needs it. Have enough confidence in her. Let her have her space and her time.

10. Give yourself time to think, even if your wife is in a panic. It doesn't mean that you or she has done anything wrong. Some women are simply emotional. Remember, you are the man in your family and your sober and careful words reassure. Better to be quiet and let your woman vent than exchange harsh words. When she is done, a few well chosen words is usually all that is needed. If not, a loving whipping followed by intercourse will usually do the trick.

Love her and cherish her. A Taken in Hand woman is the joy of a lifetime. Think about how blessed you

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are to be able to begin this adventure.⁴¹⁰

"WHAT TAKEN IN HAND REQUIRES OF YOU AS A HUSBAND" (1 JULY 2009)

Frankly, so long as you are considerate, thoughtful, and attentive to your wife's needs, there is no reason to change your attitude toward her. Regarding her as some inferior being would be rather stupid.

Still, there are some points worth considering.

First, understand that—regardless of the state of your marriage—it did not get that way overnight. This is especially true if one or both partners had been previously married or otherwise in prior intimate relationships.

Whatever habits or reactions individuals had in previous marriages or relationships, they will probably bring into subsequent relationships. This is one reason why some people run through marriages Hollywood style. The advantage to literally taking a woman in hand is that it can break the cycle.

Second, realize that it takes two people to make a marriage and only one person to break it. While one person can carry the load briefly, no one can do so indefinitely.

Merely putting a difficult wife over the husband's lap is not going to make her love him. Sometimes, it will not even solve the problem! That said, unless the marriage is too far gone to save, it will cause her to respect him. In and of itself, that can be of great value.

The chances are quite good that a husband is not going to see any dramatic changes at the beginning. Not only do women test, entrenched behaviors resist change. Nevertheless, the padding of a woman's bare buttocks will frequently bring about the desired changes.

Third, again unless the relationship is dead, there are simply those times when your wife *expects* you to *take charge*. Although a woman's signals are often subtle, they may proliferate until she totally loses respect for her husband's capabilities.

At the same time, she wants to be among the most important things in her husband's life—certainly ahead of any other woman.

Fourth, Taken in Hand cannot be a *pin the tail on the donkey* addendum to the domestic agenda. It must be systemic.

One reason that many people find Taken in Hand so difficult to understand is that it requires rethinking and unlearning disastrous concepts designed to create unstable boyfriend-girlfriend relationships based on equality and explicit kindergarten-like "may I" permissions.

Taken in Hand is deceptively simple. It only requires understand one woman and meeting her needs—though, not always her immediate wants!

Fifth, one sure way to know that Taken in Hand is not working is for spanking to become a big deal after the first few times. In as much as possible, the disparate constituencies need to flow together as effortless as possible.

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By whatever name, Taken in Hand is not some recent concoction. Instead, it developed over millennia as a practical means of problem solving before the days of professional marriage counseling, serial monogamy, and easy divorce. That is why some of its chief proponents are women!

Taken in Hand is not about beating a wife into submission. Rather, it using her natural inclinations—including the intuitive understanding that there are simply those times when a woman needs her bare buttocks soundly spanked—to separate the proverbial fire-breathing dragon from the desirable maiden.

Modern age difficulties often arise because, early in the relationship, a woman may not realize she needs to be spanked until it, with amazing predictability, dumps her emotional baggage and clears out the accumulated psychological garbage. Despite hounding choruses of naysayers, that is one reason why nonconsensual spanking—within the context of marriage—is sometimes a perquisite to domestic tranquility.

Sixth, Taken in Hand wives do not need to be micromanaged. The longer the leash, the better the marriage once understandings are reached.

More than anything else, women need holding and emotional support. There has to be a physical and emotional connection beyond sex.

Seventh, the husband needs to be sure the *he* is not the problem. Male immaturity and narcissism have no place in marriage. No matter how beautiful the wife, she is not a trophy.

Good husbands cherish and nurture their wives. Insecure men treat them as perpetual servants.⁴¹¹

“TAKEN IN HAND FOR THE FATALLY FLAWED” (4 JULY 2009)

Many articles on Taken In Hand, while full of what is no doubt very good advice, seem to presuppose a high degree of virtue in both the man and the woman in such a relationship. They describe the roles of husband and wife in terms that make both man and woman sound positively saintly.

But what if you are not that virtuous? What if the woman is, like me, bone idle, self-absorbed and prone to sulking? What if the man is (like my husband for instance) vile-tempered and prone to fly off the handle at the slightest thing, and capable of occasional bouts of total irrationality?

I think, so long as both of you have sufficient interest in maintaining a happy relationship, and so long as you can get back on course after periods of upset, falls from grace etc, you can maintain a Taken In Hand relationship even if you do not have a high degree of moral virtue, or the unselfishness and noble characters of The Waltons.

Men in the kind of idealised relationships sometimes pictured on here, I feel, never lose their temper or shout at their wives. Wives never neglect the housework because they're on the computer (again). Nor do they sulk when told off by their husbands. My husband and i are not like this.

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Nevertheless, for some reason, Taken In Hand seems to work for us. It gets us back on course after a row. It means that hurt feelings, upsets, etc, do not drag on for hours or days like they used to. It means we like each other better, communicate better, are closer than we used to be.

We are never going to be the idealised virtuous Taken In Hand couple, but we hang in there. so if, like me, you happen not to be the model virtuous wife, and your husband happens not to be the idealised perfect leader, take heart. Taken In Hand can still work for you. So long as you both want it to.⁴¹²

"A MAN WHO IS IN CONTROL - OF HIMSELF" **(20 AUGUST 2009)**

I had a marriage in which my husband, the poor man, tried very hard to make me happy. This meant he grew increasingly frustrated as all his attempts to figure out what I wanted and then give it to me made him progressively crazier and more resentful.

When he stood up to me, though, he was so angry he was scary. What *I wanted* was for him to take charge, without bending over backwards, without getting so angry his face was red, without throwing things. That kind of aggression is not the control Taken In Hand implies; it's abusive.

It's the calm control, over himself and his woman, that makes a Taken In Hand man attractive. Without that self-control, no woman will ever respect any man, I don't care how physically attractive he is, how

wealthy, how important. It's the self-control that is deeply impressive. A man who can, calmly and efficiently, do what is required in the moment, to keep potentially stressful interactions from affecting him to the point of irrationality is the man I respect.

I don't need a man to cater to me, pamper me, tell me I'm wonderful all the time, shower me with roses, or lie down like a doormat and let me do anything I want. I *do* need a man to tell me enough is enough, and we've had quite enough of that. Cheerfully, sometimes. Gruffly other times. Just so you know who is in charge. Because, for me, *someone* has to be, and I don't want that responsibility. Not in the home, no.⁴¹³

"LEARNING FROM THE BRITISH ARMY ETHOS" (26 AUGUST 2009)

I notice that several gentlemen have put forward articles on what you should be as a husband. So here is mine. Not all men agree with each other's codes. My suggestion is set your own ethos and set it with what you know. For example what I know is the British army ethos and as strange as it may sound it can fit to a Taken In Hand relationship as it does to my muckers.

British Army Ethos

Selfless Commitment: In a relationship it is not just you any more. Stick with your wife like a team. A team is only effective if all play their parts in full. Put her before your own needs, trust her totally; as the leader of the relationship remember she comes first and if you work hard

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for her she will be more willing to do things for you.

Courage: There are many different forms of courage and in a relationship you need moral courage, for if you make a foolish mistake or commit an error of judgement you have to have the courage to face your wife and admit you were wrong rather than take the coward's way out with pathetic justifications: her respect for you will plummet if you try that. Have the courage to do what is right rather than what is easy.

Discipline: We are all familiar with discipline in a taken in hand relationship but lets not forget self discipline which is what you need to put her before you. If she needs your help or emotional support then you have to give it her. Regardless of whether you are knackered or not in the mood she comes first. What right have you got to discipline her if you can't discipline yourself?

Integrity: No one likes a liar and she cannot trust you or rely on you to command her if you have no honesty: be open and honest or the relationship suffers.

Loyalty: If a woman gives herself to you she naturally would expect absolute loyalty. That means not betraying her trust, and sticking by her side even if the going gets tough. If she has done something foolish or gone off somewhere that you don't know focus on sorting things out or finding her and do not show her up in public and make a fool of her. If necessary, spank her later behind closed doors.

Respect for others: respect her position in life and her expertise in what she is familiar with even if it

does not seem very impressive compared to what you do: for example if your job is important and she is a housewife respect her for that because would you want to be in her place? You gain her respect by earning it not by putting her down.

This is what I would put forward as a husband's ethos as it's what I'm familiar with. I don't expect anyone to agree with it and I'm sure many other men and women have their own codes and values to live by that fit with what they do.⁴¹⁴

"A GOOD USE OF FORCE" (28 AUGUST 2009)

I have been reading here on Taken In Hand and sharing articles that are particularly interesting to me with my husband for more than two years now. It has dramatically changed our relationship and has brought intensity and interconnect-edness to our marriage that I never thought to be possible. One particular interaction that we had recently related specifically to several hot topics from this site, so I'll share.

I had gotten my feelings hurt by some very innocuous comment that my husband had made. I just closed up emotionally and got really sad. I wouldn't normally have reacted so strongly to such a small comment, but I was tired and brooding on a couple of other unrelated situations so I reacted badly to my husband's comment.

The mistake I made, according to my husband, was to just close up on him. While insisting that nothing was wrong, I fell silent and stormed

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off to bed. He came to tuck me in and tried to get me to talk. Nothing he said would make me open up again and share with him. He knew how tired I was, so he let me be but said that “it” wasn’t over.

He spent the next day at work and while we checked in with each other on the phone a few times, there was still a palpable gap between us by the time the kids were all asleep and we were ready to go to bed. This is the point at which my husband did something very effective and somewhat different from what his previous reactions to my shut-down behavior would have been.

He came and lay down on top of me and began to kiss me. The voice inside my head was ticked off that he was taking physical liberties when there was such an emotional gap between us. I began to resist and said to him, “I am still mad at you.” Without hesitation, he sternly said, “Get over it.” He continued to press on me and his intention to have me became apparent. I tried to resist, but he pinned my hands above me and removed my clothes. He easily overcame me and took me just as he wanted. Despite my resistance, this was intensely satisfying to us both.

His action in reconnecting with me was so much quicker to bring us crashing back together again than any “sit down and talk” marathon could have ever been. After all, there is no marital annoyance so big that sitting down and talking about it can’t make it bigger. As my husband, he is uniquely equipped to stop me in my place, open me up and get inside me, figuratively and literally. This is not to say that we

never solve our problems by communicating verbally with each other, but only that there is another option open to loving and committed couples who trust one another with their whole selves.

I don’t know exactly why being sexually overpowered by my husband reset me psychologically, but it conveniently erased any need to hash over tiny wounds verbally. Contentedly sure of his love for me, his willingness to be the leader in our home (despite resistance), and his commitment to making sure that there were no barriers between us, I was left a soft, purring kitten with no other desire but to be at peace and resume our life with joy.

In sharing this, I am reminded of another Taken in Hand writer who referred to a Bible scripture which says to wives “and thy desire shall be for thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” (Gen. 3:16, KJ Bible) Maybe in this instance, my heart and my desire were returned to my husband because he physically and effectively ruled over me?⁴¹⁵

“HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO ADJUST TO TAKEN IN HAND?” (8 OCTOBER 2009)

My husband and I have been exploring this dynamic for more than three years, now, and we still have lots of room to grow into it.

The thing is, that there are hundreds—even thousands—of changes in thought, speech, and behavior that occur for each of you when you compare where you started to where you want to be. I just don’t think it’s possible to do it all at once, and

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when you try to and fail, you get disappointed. (I remember doing that.)

My opinion is that it's best to begin with the end as a *goal* but choose one small behavior to change. Once you get that down, keep it and add another. If I recall, I started with using more respectful language towards my husband (please, thank you, may I...) and it was really surprising to me how discourteous I had been to him, I rarely used those words at all. It was a change he noticed *immediately* and it reminded him that we were trying to change together. I think it did a lot to help convince him I was serious and gave him confidence to be more assertive with me.⁴¹⁶

"WHY DO SOME RULES WORK BUT NOT OTHERS?" (7 NOVEMBER 2009)

Why do some rules work but not others?

Women who want their husband to take control in their marriage sometimes come up with a list of rules for themselves and ask their husband to enforce them. In many cases, the wife is surprised to find that in practice this rule enforcement feels all wrong to her. In some cases the wife feels as though she herself is in control because the rules were her idea. Or the whole thing feels too much like a game. In many cases, the rule enforcement makes the wife feel resentful, angry and oppressed.

I don't know whether these negative reactions happen because the whole rules and punishment thing

just doesn't work for some women, or whether it's because the woman herself instigated the rules concerned.

I love it when my husband gets really bossy with me. The more he lays down the law, the more cheerful I feel. When he really cracks the whip I feel positively ebullient. I don't feel resentful about him making rules (though sometimes I get slightly sullen when rebuked about something I have overlooked).

However, it is important to me that the rules my husband lays down for me are things he is actually interested in himself. It wouldn't work for me to have me tell him what I want him to make rules about, the rules need to be his idea in order for them to work for me.* I might feel differently if I thought that the rules were only there because I wanted them, rather than because he wanted them.⁴¹⁷

"TAKEN IN HAND WORKS BEST WHEN IT IS ORGANIC" (18 NOVEMBER 2009)

Why do rules often not function the way some couples new to Taken In Hand expect? The core difficulty may be confusion of means and ends. In theory, rules become a means to an end. The desired end is a secure—and, therefore, a solid—relationship. When that does not

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **Why do some rules work but not others?**]

happen, then frustration occurs because the rules get in the way of achieving the desired goal.

Another difficulty is that the concept of rules is borrowed from a source. If one considers that marriage and family are primal, then, rules borrowed from more complex structures may become burdensome. They simply do not fit the purpose.

Taken In Hand is much like sex. It works best when it is *organic*.

A couple can have textbook perfect sex and still have a rotten marriage. The same is true for Taken In Hand. It is simply one of those things which unlike—combinations of flour, sugar, milk, and eggs—cannot be put into a book of recipes for all to use with marvelous success.

Instead, successful Taken In Hand has to originate from within the couple.

As I pointed out before, I almost ruined my marriage by trying to do follow socially acceptable rules of engagement. It took my wife showing me *this is what women need to straighten them out* before I could even come close to saving our marriage.

For Taken In Hand to be successful, a man must get inside the woman's mind. If he fails to do that, the rest is wasted effort.

I found formalized rules to be burdensome. Instead, things have worked best for my wife and me when we simply *did what was necessary* to work out our difficulties at the time things needed to be straightened out.⁴¹⁸

I've been lurking here off and on for a few years now. The little posting I've done has been done anonymously. I thought sharing a bit of my story might be instructive, as unlike many of the women here who recognize that they want or need a Taken-In-Hand relationship, my wife was very resistant to the idea. I don't think it's an exaggeration to say she found the whole idea abhorrent.

But I should start at the beginning. I'm fifty-five and been married thirty-one years come Tuesday. Like a lot of others, I stumbled upon this web site, began reading, and recognized things about myself, my wife, and our relationship, that were revelatory and profound. I'd come of age in the sixties, considered myself a feminist, and had (and still have) four strong sisters. I was a three-striker. (I'm also an American, so maybe you could say a four-striker.)

Oddly enough it was my mother who started me down the Taken In Hand road. Through the years of my marriage, she came to stay with us often, and saw many discussions between my wife and me. She often told me how much she admired the way I handled them. I was (according to her) open, fair, and firm; often needing to insist that my wife speak her mind; and rarely letting anger affect my demeanor. Something else my mother did was respond to me in a very Taken In Hand way. She would defer to my decisions in a positive way—as if she were grateful

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for my guidance. Much to my sisters' chagrin, she valued men and wasn't afraid to show it. In these and myriad other subtle ways, she gave me the experience of a Taken In Hand relationship once-removed, as it were.

When Taken In Hand hit that fertile ground there was no going back for me. This site helped me form the ideas floating around in my head into a coherent structure. For my wife, however, it was quite another story. When I first proposed the notion of a taken in hand relationship and asked her to read articles from this web site, she was appalled. Husband as leader? No; marriage should be an even partnership. Me taking charge? Are you kidding; that would be humiliating. No; we should just 'get along.'

The frustration for me was that this wasn't something I wanted as a whim. I wasn't trying to fit our round relationship into a square hole. I was trying to save our marriage, and I knew this would fit us like a glove. Because even before finding this web site, my thinking about these issues in the context of our marriage had engendered many attempts at a Taken In Hand way of relating—usually with positive, though temporary, results. So I had seen the evidence, and this web site helped me articulate the ideas I was forming. I was the leader type and I was profoundly content when leading; she was profoundly happy when being led. I found my true masculine self through taking her in hand; her femininity blossomed through being taken in hand. Trouble was, there was a total disconnect

between the Taken In Hand wife and the untakeninhand wife. It was one thing for my wife to respond positively to being reprimanded; quite another to hear the stark terms of a male-led Taken In Hand relationship. For much of that time, I seemed to be married to two different women—and the one seemed to have no recollection of the other. Literally. I would say something like, remember that week when we were Taken In Hand and both so ecstatically happy? Or, remember making breakfast singing away after getting physically taken in hand the night before? She would not remember. I mean really not remember. It's a phenomenon I still don't understand.

I am not one for looking back—not really much for looking forward either—but when I do look back upon our Taken In Hand road, it seems a very long and mostly up-hill one. We've spent probably a hundred hours talking about it. We have been happily Taken In Hand, and we've been in periods where my simply uttering the expression, 'taken in hand,' has elicited buckets of hostility from my wife.

A little bit about the 'mechanics' of our arrangement: I think most of the parameters of Taken In Hand come naturally to men and women if we recognize and promote them. They did for us—as I said, we do have the right personality types. But over and above that, we needed a few rules.

Rule 1) my wife is not allowed to 'check out,' as we've come to call it. This was something she'd done time out of mind, that neither of us really understood, but that was a huge

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strain on our marriage. It might take the form of being all over me one day and coming home from work the next, stressed about something, and taking it out on me. Pissed at her boss, but taking the opportunity of a poorly chosen word in something I said, to apply that frustration to me. And then refusing to talk about it. And then telling me that if only I did this or that, she would be happy. And then going out to the barn to ride her horse, or shutting herself up in her room to hang out on her computer. So our rule number one is: no checking out. If there's a beef, we talk about it until it's resolved.

Rule 2) When either of us feels there's something that needs to be said, we say it—whether or not it's easy to say.

Rule 3) Friday through Sunday she's available for sex. I imagine we are like a lot of couples—there's a difference in our sex drives, and through the years this has caused a lot of stress, frustration, and misunderstandings. This rule simply puts it down there for both of us—we know the schedule and we know what's expected of us. This has been very helpful, though we haven't always held to it.

My wife was fine with not checking out, with being required to talk things out, even with being required to make herself available on weekends. But she was not at all fine with the idea of being punished. That was humiliating. She assured me that she didn't need the discipline of spanking to keep her on track. I should say here that while I consider myself the type to lead, I am not the type to

impose myself upon another against their will. So we tried it without discipline. Again and again. But the same old patterns would recur. And recur. Happy; check out; long period of silence; make up; happy, etc. Finally one day I proposed the following: I would take the riding crop that hung in her closet (which was just a riding crop, by the way—I'd never used it on her) and put it in my room in a conspicuous place. As long as it remained there, I could spank her when I felt it was justified. She would be free to retrieve it any time she wanted to rescind that permission. For that matter, I would be free to put the thing back in her closet. In either case, there would be no more spanking, but there would also be no more benefits of Taken In Hand accruing to either of us. It would be a way to try a full-blown Taken In Hand relationship as a pilot program, one on which either of us could pull the plug.

This has worked remarkably well. The only time the crop went back to her room was once I put it there out of frustration (don't remember over what), and she ended up bringing it back. She's gone from hating spankings and the very idea of being spanked, to telling me this morning before leaving to stay overnight at her sister's that she hopes I will spank her when she returns (she picked a fight last night and we ended up going to bed separately). It was not that long ago that just hearing the word spank would put a scowl on her face; now when promised a spanking, she will say, good, or blush with downcast eyes in a most charming way. She knows now

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that I am not a tyrant—that, indeed, spanking is not an easy thing for me to do. She knows now that it's not something I do to her, but something that we do together. That was the beauty of the crop idea—it gave her a chance (me too, for that matter) to road test our particular brand of Taken In Hand without committing to it long term. I'm sure it is different for others, but I believe this is the only way that would have worked for us, given our unique personalities.

So here we are well down our own little Taken In Hand path. I don't believe we will ever arrive at Taken In Hand nirvana—there will never be an end to this journey. But there are moments now—days, weeks, even months—when our happiness and contentment reach levels I'd never thought possible before we started. Rather like realizing there can be heaven on earth, and that this is it. In fact, that's what I tell people when they ask me how I'm doing. I tell them I'm living in paradise.⁴¹⁹

“LOVING THE MISSIONARY POSITION MAY BE YOUR FIRST CLUE” (11 DECEMBER 2009)

I'm still very new to this type of (admitted) relationship. I believe I've always craved this dynamic, but couldn't name it, and could never bring myself to ask for it, so it mostly found expression in sex.

I'm still in analysis stage, and putting together what I think may be reasons, but my love of the missionary position was my first inkling of these feelings, having the man on

top, and not feeling demeaned, but protected and safe, with him very close, and able to shield me from things, hold me, etc. I liked the intimacy of being able to whisper in his ear some yummy naughtiness.

Feeling his strength, his masculinity is a huge part of the experience, it's like he's strong for a reason, because I need him to be, because I need him, and it's a tremendous turn on.

I know, women aren't supposed to want protection, we're supposed to want to go out and wrestle problems to the ground, but I've done that a lot, and had to deny a lot of my softness to make it possible.

Hopefully in reading this site, I'll be able to reconcile my urges, upbringing, and personality, but for now I'm having a great time reading the stories.⁴²⁰

“THE MAN NEEDS TO BE THE PURSUER” (5 JANUARY 2010)

I believe it takes a great deal of discernment when a woman desires a Taken In Hand relationship. I'm a very strong woman who will never settle for anything less than a very strong man. However, I'm convinced that the kind of relationship that I desire is only to be had if I am found by the right man, not if I am initiating the finding.

If a man doesn't possess the drive to pursue, woo, and win me, then he's not for me. If women want to meet alpha males, they need to position themselves in the natural habitat of alpha males. My analogy is the same for recognizing counterfeit

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money. If you were working in a bank, you would not be trained to recognize counterfeit money by handling the counterfeit, it would be by the constant contact with what's real and true. Spend your time in an environment where traditional men are found and you'll recognize the genuine article. Make character a higher priority than money, looks, jobs and cars, which are all transitory.

So many times, women complain that they want a real man, but they have an intolerance for the behavior of real men and reject the whole package. When talking to men, I throw out bread crumbs along the trail. If they pick up on them, I throw out more. If they fail to see the trail, I move on.

I have found on dating sites that the best way to meet the type of men that I wish is to wait for them to approach me at all times. If a man doesn't take the initiative to contact me, then there will always be something lacking later on. Reading his profile and saving him to my favorites has been more than sufficient to indicate a possible interest for the right man. For the rest, I'm thankful not to have wasted my time, no matter how attractive I may find them.

A light gesture such as a hand at the small of my back to lead me across a room is something I find most attractive. Going dancing is so very telling as well. If a man can take care of you while out dancing, leading and guiding you around the dance floor, protecting you from unwanted attention, and feeling the way he moves in rhythm with you, that is a great indicator to me.

There are many red flags for women to observe when they first meet men, but unfortunately, the desire to be coupled can blind women to their intuition. Always trust your inner voice. Leading and protecting are entirely different from controlling and imposing. Does he respect your opinion, your desires, wants, and wishes without caving in to them, or is he annoyed, angry, or resentful for no reason?

Women often make the mistake of behaving badly themselves and should be taken in hand, but at the outset of a relationship they should not excuse men for bad behavior, reasoning away actions because of external circumstances. If you wouldn't tolerate such actions from a child, there is no excuse for a man not to exercise self-control. A man who has not mastered himself will never be able to master a woman.⁴²¹

"EMBRACING EACH OTHER'S DARKEST SECRETS" (28 JANUARY 2010)

After nearly 18 years of marriage, my wife and I are experimenting with a Taken in Hand relationship. The breaking point came after I became depressed and withdrawn and it became clear that our marriage was on the rocks despite the fact that we still loved each other dearly. (As an aside, reading other posts on this site, I'm simply astonished how many times a posting starts like this...) We both have a feeling of exhilaration like newly weds at the moment. Although I don't imagine the adrenaline rush will remain, I do feel strongly that it is the way it's

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meant to be and will be the long-term solution we both so desperately need and want.

That having been said, being an intellectual kind of guy, I find the hardest part of asserting myself the fact that I always take time to consider things and usually find that I can see most people's point of view. In general, I would say that I come across to most people as a shy, conciliatory and empathetic person. I definitely avoid conflict where I don't find it necessary. In fact, all in all, I would be exactly the sort of guy that many women (and men) on this site would warn you off as being a "weak" man. But this is very deceptive. In fact, I am usually quietly ranking the probability of my opinion being right against all others and therefore feel a sense of unassailability even if someone can convince me of their opinion—I still usually have the sense that my analysis was reasonable.

But recently, I have been becoming more and more aware of the need to be the head of the household and be more in control both mentally and physically over my darling wife. This is coming from a dark and irrational place that I don't understand and have always suppressed. It bubbled up to my consciousness—my rational persona—through feelings of hurt and anger but it's definitely always been there and now it won't go away. Why do I feel these urges? Am I a bad person? And why does my beautiful wife, so spontaneous, vivacious and direct to the point of being forthright, feel so comfortable when I assert myself? We neither of us understand this

completely. While she is worried about the apparent "demeaning" nature of being the woman in a relationship like this, she needs it on some level and can't hide her obvious responsiveness. For my part, I have struggled with the deep shame of thinking that there must be something very wrong with me.

So, you could see this article, perhaps, as a kind of armchair psychoanalysis of what it all means. I can see from many of the posts on this site that I'm not the only one to struggle with the "meaning of it all". It's helped me beyond description to be able to read so many different perspectives on something I'm also feeling.

I also wouldn't be the first person to go back to evolutionary biology to try to find the answer here. Several people have speculated that, back in the caves of pre-history, the woman needed someone to protect her and chose the most dominant man accordingly. I think this is surely true, but I also notice that there are precious few people (if any) who, armed with this new logic, feel comfortable proclaiming to the world at large how they feel. I'm guessing that despite all the affidavits and congratulations exchanged by most people on this site, they would still rather keep the details of their relationship to themselves and not tell their friends and neighbours. (By the way, that's why this site is so important—deep respect and gratitude to the Taken In Hand site owner!)

In a way, the problem is not explaining where the primal feelings are coming from, but explaining how it is that we override them so

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easily. Here, I think it's the tremendous flexibility and adaptiveness of the brain that lies at the heart of it all. Analogous to the way our brains have picked up writing, philosophy, ethics and watching TV, etc, etc, despite these not being "necessary" for prehistoric daily life, we have also been able to slowly rationalize human-to-human interactions and change our behaviour. We do it so well, that for most of us, it is now second nature, at least in a modern Western culture, to say that men and women are equal and should be able to aspire to the same things in life. I suspect that most people, if they ever thought about it, would conclude that feelings running contrary to this opinion come from conceit and selfishness (or maybe poor upbringing, cultural indoctrination, etc.). But something else is going on. There's more to the prevalence of politically incorrect thinking and motivations than bad ethics, it's just that nobody's allowed to talk about 'the dark side'. In fact, in many cases it's pretty well verboten to even suggest that peoples' attitudes might somehow be influenced by their biological, primal urges. This is often justified explicitly with, "don't even consider that possibility because it will excuse the evil-doers for their behaviour" which is the dreaded slippery slope. No! Rapists are just bad men, period, no more to say, don't even go there... well, to preempt myself, I'm not about to let rapists off the hook but I'm still going to go there.

If you give in to the biological component as part of the explanation, i.e. you say, okay, by and large,

there *are* deep and primal urges in men to be in charge of their women and deep and primal urges in women to live under the loving protective control of their man, you can still get all the opinions on this site and elsewhere by simply acknowledging that the suppression of these urges versus the strength of the intellectually-arrived-at preferred attitude varies from person to person but generally successfully overrides the urges. And also everyone has a different set of experiences and background that mould their "intellectual" interpretations of, and responses to, their primal urges. So in the end, the fantastic plasticity of the brain itself shapes our behaviour enormously and disguises the commonality of the base urges. I find this way of looking at it extremely liberating. Just as wanting to eat chocolate doesn't mean you disagree with the health expert's opinion that sweet, fatty foods are not good for you, nor does it mean you are a bad person for wanting it, so, feeling urges to rape your wife (or be raped by your husband) doesn't mean you condone rape or that you are intrinsically immoral. It's whether you rape your wife or not that makes you a bad person not what your urges are.

Clearly, I've gone into territory that will tread on lots of peoples' toes now. Looking at all the fuss it caused when a woman wrote "When rape is a gift", imagine how much worse it would have been if that had been written by a man? I still don't think I've ever read or heard of a guy admitting that he wants to rape a woman. Obviously, not on-

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ly *do* some men, but they're even willing to risk more or less everything they value in life for it. Now that's some urge! It's time to look at it and marvel at the sheer force of that. In fact, I'll go further: unless you take into account the strength of the primal urges we all feel and not judge a person for having those urges, you can't begin to solve the actual problem—namely, that despite the presence of urges, it's still unacceptable to act on them without examining the consequences. That's what I'm coming to. There should be nothing to apologize for in having primal urges. They are just *there* (and probably far more common and dark than anyone cares to admit). But you do need to identify them and know how you plan to respond to them. So actually, at this point, I would be arguing that if you're denying to yourself that you have the urge to rape your wife, you are being irresponsible and ultimately unethical because you won't be able to deal with it as well as someone who is able to admit it to himself. And as a woman, if you insist that any man with the urge to rape a woman is a "bad man", you're actually fueling the problem because fewer men will learn to deal with it properly.

In this sense, anyone who has crossed the line and discussed their desires to have a Taken in Hand relationship with their partner, should pat themselves on the back for being so damned responsible!! :-)

But seriously, this way of seeing it doesn't just get you off the hook. Many people here have commented on how relieved they feel to firstly

be able to confront it and secondly to see how many others feel the same way. But relief is only the half of it! I believe it's time we, as a culture, were advanced enough to acknowledge the presence of primal urges without *any* condemnation and then to encourage people to deliberately follow them (if and only when the consequences have been examined and accepted by all people affected). Where there's a conflict of urges and consequences, every effort should be made to find benign outlets for those urges or ways to handle them. Then we would have a functional society in which we weren't all hiding dark secrets. Women could openly tell a guy on their first date of their desire for a strong man who will be firmly in charge without fear that he will think she has psychological problems. If this was as easy as saying you like jazz music and movies, there would far fewer dysfunctional relationships. It all starts with the acceptance and embracing of all primal urges.

Well, I don't have any magic bullets for changing society, but I'm sure it's immediately possible within trusting relationships. Weak as I may appear to those who don't know what I'm actually feeling, my wife can now have the satisfaction of knowing that deep down, I am the man she needs, but I'm also sensitive enough and responsible enough to consider her feelings and put them before my urges. And sometimes this means giving in to my urges. I can also finally make sense of the dichotomy in my intellectual beliefs and my deeper feelings. In other words, I can now be proudly honest

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about my primal urges to my wife and put my trust in her and vice versa. At that point, we haven't simply immunized ourselves against each other's reactions, we've actually embraced each other's darkest secrets and can truly be ourselves to live life to the fullest.

Sounds like the best of both worlds to me... or am I just kidding myself?⁴²²

"BE PATIENT!" (3 FEBRUARY 2010)

Until recently I had a demanding profession, which required, and got, my excellent organizational skills and leadership. Sadly these were skills I did not leave behind when I walked into the front door of my home. I always wanted a very traditional marriage—one in which my husband would be the undisputed leader, the decision maker in the family and who would be able to take me very firmly in hand—I just didn't show it. Until now.

Twelve months ago I discovered the Taken in Hand site and I related strongly to the underlying principles of Taken In Hand. The overwhelming sense of connectedness of the couples in these relationships made me aware of my longing to be in that place too.

I eagerly shared what I had learned with my husband of five years. He was definitely not interested. He focused on the discipline aspect. He did not abuse women he informed me, he was a SNAG. My response to this was to tell him that SNAG is an acronym for Sniveling

Neutered Aging Gender-bender. Oh dear!

I kept reading posts on the site and bombarding him with selected readings that I hoped would give him the whole picture. Talk about overkill!

After I read the post entitled "He isn't interested in or capable of taking you in hand?" I emailed him a copy along with my heartfelt apology for putting so much pressure on him. He said that the reading resonated with him, and he was prepared to think further upon it.

Well, he thought and thought and thought and said and did nothing.

Two months later, little Miss Impatience here decided that we are here for a good time, not a long time, so it was time for him to share the results of his thinking.

I think he had hoped that I had forgotten about it and he was certainly not going to discuss it further.

So I gave it one last enthusiastic go. For the next month or so, whenever we had a minor/major problem, which usually resulted in me withdrawing from him, I reminded him (though not immediately) that there was a loving way of reconnecting if he was prepared to take a leadership role. He countered that, for the most part, he already saw himself as a leader in our relationship. I had to admit that this was true, but it only went a small part of the way. Then, after a recent, heated discussion on what it meant to 'belong' to each other, it seemed that we were not even on the same page.

So I gave up. I was all out of words.

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Miracles do happen. Within a couple of days I noticed my husband taking a much greater interest than usual in my daily activities, instructing me on minor details regarding household expenses and generally making it clear that any major decisions on my part needed to be run by him before I acted on them. I have suddenly become aware that at times, he is using a new tone of voice with me, giving me well earned reprimanding looks, and disrespectful language has earned me an occasional stinging swat on the rear end.

Needless to say, without any effort on my part, I find myself responding to his more overt leadership. It's early days, I know, but it's a start in the right direction.

And it is so liberating.⁴²³

"RECOGNITION" (8 FEBRUARY 2010)

When I finally met my husband, we had had an internet/phone relationship for about eight months, the last three focused on a permanent relationship. I knew we had several things in common: a first marriage disaster, a strong dedication to family life, and a similar belief system and lifestyle. But, would he be the one?

In the ten years since my divorce, I had had plenty of time to think about what I was looking for in a husband. I had read this website and dreamed of finding a Taken in Hand man. I knew wanted a man to take care of me, but I was a strong-willed, overachieving single mom. How in the world could I get from point A

to point B? How would I even know how to react if I met such a man? I had spent so much time being the head of the household, I might even react as if someone had stolen my job! (And yes, to skip ahead, that's exactly how I reacted. To hear me yell, you would have thought I actually wanted to keep the job!)

The first night we were alone together, we sat talking quietly on a couch. When I recounted my suffering with men, his reaction was, "So, I'm basically the exact opposite." In the wee hours, he kissed my forehead and gently ordered me to sleep, because otherwise I'd be tired in the morning. As I drifted off, I wondered about this confident, strong man who seemed to think so highly of himself. Did he have anything to back it up, or was it just talk?

The next night, we got a little closer physically. I decided not to be the "sex police", since we both knew that our religious beliefs do not include sexual activity before marriage. I just let myself melt into his arms and relax as we talked. After a while, he started kissing my ear, and my whole body reacted. I wondered how the evening would end. Would I be disappointed? Would he be an immature boy-man who would try to steal home base? Would I have to step in as a mom-woman and control the situation? Honestly, it's what I expected. And if that happened, I would fly home and stay single.

But no. From my ear, he moved along and started kissing my neck, first softly and then intently. He held me tightly and, finally, I turned my head in an effort to get away from

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the intense feelings. And that's when it happened.

Recognition.

Most men, I imagine, would have politely stopped, since I was pulling away. After all, we had just met. Most would at least have asked me if I was OK. But he didn't. As I squirmed and turned my neck, he readjusted his grip, held me a little closer, and started kissing the other side! I was not getting away! In a few minutes, when I had given up all ideas of escape, and when I realized that if he had wanted to take me sexually, I could not have resisted (because of what was happening in me, not physical force on his part), he gently stopped and sat up again, smiling down at me. He didn't go any further physically. He was true to my trust.

As we talked a little more that night, he told me there was one thing he wanted me to know. It was that, yes, he believed that men and women were equal, and that women were very capable. But, in his own home, he would wear the pants. There would only be one; the other one would wear the skirt. He would take care of me, not the other way around. This is how he wanted it.

I found myself in a strange position. For years, I had been rehearsing how I would tell a man what I wanted in a relationship. I had tried to figure out how to word it, how to make it sound acceptable. Now here he was—telling me, and bluntly. I think I nodded and said, "Me, too" or something lame like that. Nothing articulate, nothing bold, nothing even remotely brilliant. I was just

sitting there being myself. And my Self felt totally at home with him.

So that was it. Recognition. I wish I could tell you that I have been graceful in face of his leadership and acted consistently thankful that this wonderful man is finally in my life. But I have often tested and questioned and struggled. In response to this, he has, well, been the strong man I have always wanted in my life.

But that's for another day. This was just about how I got from point A to point B. Turns out I didn't even have to figure out how to get there. He took me.⁴²⁴

"HOPING FOR A HAPPY MARRIAGE?" (9 FEBRUARY 2010)

One of the most important ingredients for a happy Taken In Hand marriage is *exclusivity*. I want my husband to be the only man in my life, and I the only woman in his...from a sexual and/or romantic perspective. A husband may have a mother, and female friends, but his wife must be the only woman he is intimate with, both sexually and socially.

Similarly, a wife may have lots of friends, but she must not gossip about her husband to others or be sexual with others.

They need to focus exclusively on each other, exploring each other more deeply and broadly over the years, instead of watering down their interest in each other by turning their attention to others or sharing private information with others. A marriage needs to be

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a *private* intimate space that is just between the two of them. This creates, nurtures and preserves the sexual passion in a marriage and is absolutely paramount for a happy marriage.

When a man passionately loves a woman, he loves only that one woman. She is the reason he gets out of bed in the morning and goes to work...and he is the reason she does the same, whether she is a housewife or works outside the home. She is the light of his life, and he the same for her. They may have other friends and interests but they stick together and treat their marriage as a precious sacred bond. *They cleave unto each other and forsake all others.*

In a happy marriage, husband and wife are on the same page in every decision that is made. He listens to her, hears her thoughts and takes them to heart. In a Taken In Hand marriage, the husband makes the ultimate decision, but he takes his wife's needs and desires into consideration in the decision-making process. A Taken In Hand husband puts his wife and their marriage first, always, so his wife's input is very important to him.

Sexually speaking, compatibility is important. A Taken In Hand marriage is a passionate one, not a sexless or merely companionate one. So it is very important, if you are seeking a Taken In Hand relationship, that you talk about sexual issues and be very sure *before* you become sexually intimate with each other, that there is not a terrible incompatibility in your sexual desires. Do not wait until you already feel bonded to each other to discover that your po-

tential spouse has a hankering for a particular kind of sexual act that you find abhorrent. Honesty is paramount here. Similarly, waiting several years into marriage to say, "you know, you ask me to do this, but it makes me intensely uncomfortable," is far too late for such revelations. Talk about these things *before you even kiss*. Do not assume that your desires are compatible. Talk about it. This is important for both of you. Sexual compatibility is vital for a happy marriage.

Values compatibility is also vital for a happy marriage. If you cannot even agree on the ground rules of a potential marriage, or your values are incompatible, a marriage would be unhappy and unstable. Happily married couples feel deeply aligned in terms of values. Find out about a potential partner's values before you allow yourself to become bonded to the person.

Very key to happy marriages—and I know this because I see them all around me even though mine did not last—is pure, loyal, abiding LOVE. Love your partner, like your partner, and show them, through words and actions, that they are the reason you get up each day. Be true to them, give them every reason to trust you and zero reasons to fear or disrespect you. Love, like trust and respect, is earned.⁴²⁵

"PASSIONATE CONQUEST" (11 FEBRUARY 2010)

What another writer on this site controversially called rape I'd rather call a *conquest*.

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Imagine, if you will, that a committed, loving, Taken-In-Hand couple decides that they want just that: a little competition of the wills, so to speak — a friendly contest — exhibition — of physical power — one where the winner 'takes all,' if you dig. ;-D

In this excursion, he agrees to, with a safely limited goal and her continued safety in mind, 'unchain,' if you will, more of his physical capacity than she has previously been privileged to experience, in order to safely, and yet still wholly physically, constrain her, and overcome her, his wife, whom he loves, in order to inexorably prevail in entering into her in love.

And in this excursion, because of her desire to more fully know his physical power, she resists strongly, to be challenging and worthy of conquest, simply to require his better efforts, in order to experience the strivings required for him to overcome her; to discover his superior strength and the surpassing passion which can spring out as he desires to know her and to take her, even as she is losing at their match.

It is a great and deep privilege for those women who desire it to experience at first hand more of the strength of the man to whom she has entrusted her safe-keeping.⁴²⁶

**"HE WAS HORRIFIED BUT NOW HE IS VERY
HAPPY" (2 MARCH 2010)**

My husband and I began a Taken In Hand marriage ten weeks ago, at my suggestion. At first he was appalled that I would want to be "sub-

jugated" but I tried very hard to describe the dynamic I was looking for, of shared responsibilities but a male leader in our marriage. We started out slowly, and have gained so much. We are, in his words, like newlyweds again, crazily in love with each other. His being in charge (finally) has allowed him to relax and enjoy his take-charge nature (which was there all along, and which I bitterly fought against). Our teenage daughter has noticed the huge change in our relationship and in our home, and has asked why we don't fight anymore. Instead, she finds us snuggling together in the evening, and holding hands.

I have changed inside, due to my choice not to argue with him any more, and to let him make decisions. He does micro-manage in the house, but I think only because my disorganization was making him crazy, and now he can finally change things for the better without watching me have a fit. When I realized how many, many things he has begun instructing me to do differently, I asked him how he lived with me before. He admitted that he was very angry with me most of the time, but he loved me too much to do anything about it except stew. Now he has a clear road: he tells me to handle something, and I do it.

I have already found that I LOVE my new way of life. I love not arguing, I love the sense of peace I have in my daily life, and I even love being told what to do. Who knew I could come to that, after years of thinking I had to fight him tooth and nail to retain my independence. I used to say to my girlfriends (who

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were aware sometimes of the nearly constant bickering in my house) that every time I drew a line in the sand, he stepped over it. What a perfect man for a Taken in Hand relationship, right? And it wasn't until I found this site that I was able to recognize what I wanted deep down in my heart, underneath that prickly outer core that was my "independent self," was a man with the strength to deal with me.

He has transformed from a withdrawn and often edgy husband into a kind and loving one who is always concerned with how I feel, but absolutely, firmly in charge at all times. He is growing more comfortable in his leadership role, and has come a long way in this new journey, from being horrified at my suggestion that we make this change, to telling me that we should have done this fifteen years ago.* I agree.⁴²⁷

"THE FIVE LOVE LANGUAGES, BY GARY CHAPMAN: A REVIEW" (4 MARCH 2010)

The Five Love Languages, by Gary Chapman offers simple, practical suggestions for enhancing marriages and helping troubled ones. As with everything, commitment is the key.

The thesis of the book is that each person has one, sometimes two ways, or languages, of expressing love. Couples more often fail to convey their love because they simply do not know each other's love language. It is as different as English is

from Chinese. During the 'in love' part of their relationship, their 'love tank' is kept full with the emotional adrenalin rush of it all. But later, an unawareness of their love languages becomes apparent when the arguing begins and their feelings of love for each other decline, eventually emptying their 'love tank'.

Married couples do not need to have the same languages to be happy, but they do need to know what their partner's language is in order to successfully convey the love they feel for them. Particular ways may even feel unnatural, but the point is that each is choosing to GIVE love to the other.

The languages are

1. Words of Affirmation
2. Quality Time
3. Receiving Gifts
4. Acts of Service
5. Physical Touch

Some need to hear the words "I love you" many times a day, but feel no need for gifts or acts of service. Some don't feel loved unless their spouse gives them little gifts or spends lots of quality time with them, but don't need the words of affirmation or physical touch. Taken In Hand readers may find that for them there is another love language not mentioned in this book, namely, control. Many Taken In Hand women need their husband's active control the way many others need physical touch or words of affirmation, and would feel unloved without that, no matter how much love their husband was showing in all five of the ways given in the book. For Tak-

* [Note to the writer: if you give me a name I will attribute this accordingly. — The Editor]

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en In Hand women, physical touch, words of affirmation, gifts and acts of service are nice but don't speak to their heart the way their husband's firm, active control does. Likewise, for husbands in Taken In Hand relationships, what makes them feel loved more than anything else is the way their wife responds so positively to their control.

People wanting to introduce their spouse to their desire for a Taken In Hand marriage may find this book an aid in expressing their needs.⁴²⁸

"HOW I OVERCAME MY OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDER" (28 MAY 2010)

I am a slave. I know that this is too extreme for many on Taken In Hand, but just bear with me for a second. I have literally found my freedom in this slavery, and regained my life through this submission. I offer up my story as a defense for submissive type relationships and evidence that some of us are truly better off because of such.

I always called myself obsessive-compulsive, but I don't know what it was exactly. Whatever you call it, I was born with a problem. I set rules for myself. Obviously, I know that this is healthy to some degree. I know it is good to have a budget, watch what you eat, and practice some time management skills. However, I carried it to extremes, to the point where it was debilitating. It was ruining my life. For example, I had such strict rules for cleaning my house that in reality nothing ever got done. I did dishes/laundry for 15 min, cleaned a room for 15 min,

did dishes/laundry for 15 min, cleaned another room for 15 min. This added up to 1 hour, which meant I had earned 30 min of "free time". This also meant that I HAD to move on to the next task on the agenda, regardless if the first was finished or not, and regardless if there was another area of the house that really needed to take priority. I even set rules for my social life. I had to call/visit one person a day, no more, no less. I had rules for clothes (wear everything precisely twice), rules for my car (the console must have exactly 8 quarters, 5 dimes, 5 nickels, and 10 pennies), rules for my toe nail polish (change the color the first of every month, but NEVER change it otherwise). I had rules for everything, and complicated systems for carrying them out. What I accomplished from all of these rules was, more often than not, nothing at all. My house was a mess, I neglected family, friends, and pets, and I was stressed out all of the time.

About 6 months into our marriage, my husband became my Master. Interestingly enough, I didn't simply replace my rules with his. If this were the case, I would not consider myself cured. What happened was much better. Over time, my desire to please him overcame my rules, beginning with the house. I knew that he wanted a clean house, so I forced myself to break my rules and just do what needed to be done. It then moved on to my social life. I knew that he wanted me to be happy and truly enjoy my friends, and I couldn't do that out of a sense of obligation to call (or not call). It became

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easier and easier to shed these shackles on my life, and eventually I was actually living my life again. I no longer live in a constant state of stress, and I am the happiest I have ever been! Of course my husband does have rules for me, but he is my husband first and my Master second. His rules are for good purposes (don't speed, speak with respect, dress modestly etc.). I owe my sanity to his loving mastery and the submission that burns in my veins. My collar is only intangible, but I would not trade it for anything in this entire world.⁴²⁹

"ALPHA MALE IN LIFE CLUELESS IN LOVE" (16 JUNE 2010)

First off I would like to say that this site has been quite the eyeopener. For years I searched among the bottom of the barrel bdsm sites with a lot of confusion. Now I feel I have found something that is purely me.

I have always been a leader. The guy that people go to for advice. The guy that people ask for help, cause they know it will be done. These qualities have been with me my entire life, but in my love life It's almost non-existent.

I admit to being very inexperienced in relationships. At 24 I have only had two. My first relationship really set me back. She was a very immature girl who wanted things I could not provide. When I left this relationship I had already done some serious damage to myself. I became a whipping boy lover who would rarely take a stand.

Women in my life have all varied. My grandmother was an abused woman who served a tyrant for 50 years. My mother was a very independent, strong and stubborn woman. And then there is my current ex.

In our relationship I was confused at the outset. As a man I always try to find a way to "Fix" things. In doing so I would try to please her in every way I could. Thus destroying myself and our relationship along with it. She actually showed me this site and it blew my mind. All this time I was focusing on what she wanted and not what I wanted. I know she would admit to have used this against me from time to time, but I forgive her :P.

At this stage in my life I'm rebuilding—becoming the man I want to be. I'm currently working on myself. Disciplining and learning more about myself.

I'd like to ask the users here if they have any similar stories. Any feedback would be much appreciated.⁴³⁰

"TAKEN IN HAND RELIEVES TENSION AND INCREASES GOODWILL" (21 JUNE 2010)

Taken In Hand is not about morality or imperfection (the faulty woman idea). I think it's more about managing the tension that comes about through the natural differences between us, between people first and foremost, but men and women in particular. The biggest difference between men and women lies with how, within a loving relationship, we handle conflict and the difference of opinion, that can lead to argument.

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Now, if instead of getting into a huge conflagration at the slightest sign of trouble (which often happens when a disagreement blows out of proportion and out of control), instead what you have is one rather simple answer: "take it out on my hide." Or, if you're not into spanking, then a firm statement like "you will stop that right now." In other words, the goal, as others have said, is not to become better people (although, from an objective standpoint, that might actually happen over time, as we learn better ways of expressing anger and frustration with each other); instead, the ultimate goal is to learn how to enjoy each other more, and avoid breaking up, with all the pain and loss associated with endings. Relationships are not difficult if you have a reliable way to resolve conflict.

In the best of all possible worlds, no one would hold grudges, no one would threaten divorce, and no one would betray or abandon anyone. In *this* world, however, we do all of those things, but we do them less when we have effective ways to channel our innate aggression, resentments, fears, and doubts about each other.

That's why I like the Taken In Hand dynamic. It gives the man a way of expressing frustration, and maybe even real anger, without destroying the connection between you. In fact, the connection is strengthened through spanking, discipline, and control. It's a complicated recipe, in some ways, and in other ways, it's simple and makes complete sense, to have a man express his strength in this very physi-

cal way. It makes sense for a woman to be the recipient of his authority and control, since it's safe and containing, and allows me, for one, to feel protected in a world that is quite lonely otherwise.

It's an addictive feeling, to have my man spank me very hard at the end of the day. All my resistance fades away, and I open up to him in ways that simply don't happen as easily any other way. I know the science of this, I understand the psychology, but I still cannot explain it adequately. All I know is, he says he likes to do it because he likes to dominate, and I know I like to do it because I like to be dominated. In no way are these 'moral' or 'immoral' truths. They just *are*. I'm not becoming perfected when he spans me. I just like the way it feels, and so does he.

I have noticed two things since we begun this. One is that my significant other is much more solicitous. He sees me as a woman, rather than as a girly-looking guy, as so many men have been trained by society to see women these days. So he opens doors for me with alacrity and attention he had not shown prior to this, brings me tea, carries heavy objects, and never lets me feel like I'm on my own, dealing with life without his supervision and concern.

The second thing that has become obvious is that although when we started spanking, he was not consciously concerned about hurting me, now he has made it clear that it's okay if spanking causes me pain, but he won't do it if it *hurts* me, and I understand the distinction. The former is physical, and expected; the

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latter is emotional, and potentially damaging to our connection, and to be avoided. Tears are not a reliable indicator of being hurt, of course, so we're not talking about tears (which I haven't yet felt like shedding during a spanking). Being hurt is in the heart, and there's nothing about being taken in hand that hurts me. In fact, I feel wonderful knowing he's in charge of me and of my body.

There is a morality to being taken in hand. It's subtle at times, and overt at others, but it's always there, under the surface. The morality is what guides us and being taken in hand is necessary for both of us to be happy. We have been in relationships where the dynamic is irresponsible and self-serving. Within a taken in hand setting, however, neither of us feels out of control, and we both know the connection is strong and focused on each other, and focused on making the relationship work.⁴³¹

"CHECKING HIS SUITABILITY" (21 JULY 2010)

To varying degrees, almost all women want their man to take charge. I realize that this may seem to not be the case at times, but consider this common interaction between a husband and wife:

Him: Wanna go out to eat?

Her: Sure. Where are we going?

Him: I don't know. Where do you want to go?

Her: I don't know. Where do you want to go?

Him: Oh.. I dunno... Anywhere is ok..

So then she throws a hissy fit because of his indecisiveness.

Why? Because women are evolutionarily designed to be attracted to the alpha male, the tribal leader. Decisiveness is a trait that an alpha male possesses.

Even if the wife in the above example doesn't want to follow her husband's lead, she still wants him to at least try to lead.

If he suggests going to McDonalds, and she doesn't want to go to McDonalds, she'd still rather hear him say "McDonalds" than "I don't know. Where do you want to go?"

The latter response suggests that her husband is comfortable giving up his power to other people, and so, is a beta male. This causes her to lose attraction.

So, this is a way that the wife "tests" her husband to see if he is alpha or beta. A woman's mind is evolutionarily wired to feel attraction for men that exhibit alpha male behavioral cues. She may not even consciously understand the process.

It's actually in the woman's best interests that the man NOT understand that he is being tested. Because, if he knows he is being tested, he can consciously exhibit the appropriate behavior even if it isn't what he would naturally do.

Women are constantly testing men in different ways, observing their behavior, in order to subconsciously decide whether or not they should be sexually attracted.

Women obviously aren't going to tell us that they're testing us. And most of us men are ignorant of women's tests, so we just assume

that when women try to tool us or control us that they're aggressive and dominant (or crazy).

But these women are more likely just trying to see if we'll LET THEM control us. Because if we'll let them do it, we're probably beta males, and thus, unattractive.

I think there are a lot of men out there that just don't understand how this works, and assume that women are aggressive, dominant, and/or crazy.

So they settle into a beta male role in the relationship. I'm not saying that all men are naturally alpha, but most probably at least have a latent alpha personality. Unfortunately, most men are conditioned by society to exhibit beta male behavioral cues.

There is usually only one alpha male in the tribe at a time. When he is overthrown by a beta male, the beta male transforms into the alpha male. Ever had to deal with a co-worker that was a great guy before he was promoted but afterwards turned into a complete dick? Latent alpha personality.

Perhaps most women wouldn't mind seeing sexy latent alpha behavior from their new manager, but we guys don't like it as much.

As for the reason that there are so few books on relationships for men, I'd guess that the answer is because we men have large egos and are not willing to accept advice. We already know EVERYTHING we need to know about women! Somehow we fail to realize that this isn't actually the case.⁴³²

"HUSBANDS GETTING STARTED AT TAKING CHARGE" (1 DECEMBER 2010)

Here are some suggestions for husbands wanting to take small steps towards a more Taken-in-Hand style of marriage.

I decided that the Taken-in-Hand concept was worth trying — my wife did not come to me wanting to make changes. She has never asked me explicitly to lead her, so I have taken things very slowly, and checked regularly to ensure that happiness was increasing for us both.

My marriage is still very conventional, certainly in comparison with most of the material that I have read on this website, but it has elements of Taken In Hand that might be useful for aspiring Heads-of-Household.

1. Build a firm foundation for leadership

These suggestions assume that you have the basics of a happy marriage already, that you are a trustworthy, loyal, hardworking, reliable, loving and considerate husband.

I doubt that any wife would trust her husband's judgment, consent to his leading role and hand-over control unless the husband has a solid record as a good man.

2. A few warnings

It is one thing for your wife to come to you wanting Taken In Hand, but quite another for you to start rapidly moving towards Taken In Hand without her consent.

Taken In Hand exposes you to a whole box of tools for your relation-

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ship, so be discerning about what and when you use them. This article may not apply to your relationship at the moment, and may never apply. Be sensitive to the limits of your relationship and wife.

The goal is for a lifetime of happiness together, so expect your marriage to evolve over years, not weeks.

If you have already been married for a long time, your relationship is probably in a steady pattern. Your wife has expectations about how it works, so any change in her behaviour will be gradual.

Finally, be prepared that Taken In Hand may not work for your marriage or your wife. As a wise husband, be prepared to consider other approaches to build a vibrant and happy marriage.

3. Who is your role model for leadership?

Choose a role model from history or fiction, someone who exemplifies the kind of leadership your marriage needs.

Someone demonstrating commitment to people, leaders of teams, men achieving greatness by building strong groups.

This is not public information—it is to help you imagine how you will build the team that is your marriage. How would your role model approach team members?

Thinking of yourself in the role of head of the household will help you act as if you are.

4. Attitude not content

As leader of the house, you have the final say, so what she says matters less than the way she says it.

You always speak respectfully to her, and you expect to be treated in the same way. When she does not do so, call out her rude behaviour. (Calling out means that you talk about the way she is speaking, *not* what she said.)

If she has a problem or issue, and asks you rudely, then first deal with the way she is asking for help. Obviously, don't choose some life-threatening problem to begin with.

The first time you do this, you can expect increased conflict, and many times following as well. Over time, if she is suited to be taken in hand, she will learn that a better way to ask for help is to ask politely, to say "please".

Speaking respectfully is a good first rule... not that a wise husband testing the waters of leadership in his marriage will refer to "rules" at all.

5. Be firm and consistent

Plenty of writers have reiterated the need for their husband to be firm and consistent, so it is clearly an issue for new heads-of-household.

When you start making small changes, you need to be clear about what you want to change, and be consistent in the change.

It is only natural that she will resist the change, so make it small, but be firm. Test the waters and go slowly in small steps. Identify and call-out (verbalise it) when she does the wrong thing.

Conflict is going to increase in the early stages as you make changes to

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the pattern of your relationship—this is to be expected. Do not be afraid or back away from conflict.

For example, once you begin to focus on her attitude not her content, be consistent about it.

6. Start to recognise opportunities for taking command

It took a long time for me to realize that my wife was giving me opportunities to be head-of-the-household.

When she asks your opinion, for advice, to do something, take it seriously. Give the issue some thought and make a decision. If she rejects your decision, then ask why she came to you. Be prepared to be the bad guy at times.

For example, my wife asked (respectfully) that I please make the last checks of the children and see that the house is secure before coming to bed. For years, I saw this as a silly imposition on my being more efficient at getting to bed quickly, instead of being a perfect opportunity to man up.

7. Be clear about her explicit yield of control to you

If the steps above seem to working, then it is important that after a few months you start to be more explicit about the changes in the relationship.

This has also means that you can check that you are both feeling happier about your marriage.

Once you have established a new pattern, then if she pushes back, it is okay to express disappointment or even anger about her behaviour. Your marriage matters to you, and you are allowed to demonstrate that.

Express quiet but firm displeasure when she tries to cut out your leadership role.

For example, I decided that I would close the car door for her, so that I would make the last check of the children and the car before we drive. A silly little old-fashioned action, I know, and one that felt very unnatural at first. She resisted for a short while, but I insisted, and she relented. One day, a few months after we had this new pattern of behaviour, she loudly insisted that this was one thing she really disliked. I expressed my anger at the disrespectful way she was treating me, and agreed that I would stop. Three days later, she told how much she missed it, and asked me very humbly if I would start closing the car door for her again. I did not gloat or put her down, I simply agreed to do so.

8. Manage her plans

Over dinner, or exclusive time together, ask her what she is planning to do the following day, or on the weekend, or next week. Discuss her plans, and take command when invited to do so.

You can't take command to begin with, but you can express an opinion, or offer advice, particularly if she is overloaded. You will find lots of opportunities for leadership, and help her out, by helping her prioritise. You may find that asking for advice evolves over time into asking for permission.

For example, my wife has a tendency to over-commit herself and get run down. She is a helpful and loving person that cannot easily say

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no when others ask her for help. By discussing her plans with me, and asking my advice, she is actually asking for permission. When I tell her not to do something, I may be the bad guy, but it gives her the excuse she needs to say no to someone, because her husband said so.

9. Treat her growing dependence with love

Eventually, you may find that your wife is coming to you regularly for advice and permission.

It is important to respect her dependence on you, and treat her growing need for leadership with love.

Having taken the decision to take your wife in hand, asking for permission is to be expected. You are getting what you set out to create in your marriage. You cannot expect her to continue to defer to you if you do not consistently give the leadership and control she is beginning to crave.

So, treat her growing dependence with love. She is not coming to you to be annoying, or to test you, but because she values your guidance and judgment.

10. Enjoy the ride

Marriage is a journey that you take together, not a destination. Successful marriage requires continuous effort. When it is not working, only a crazy husband continues with the same behaviour. You have the power to make changes, and decide what those changes will be.

Make changes and slowly evolve your marriage to increase both your happiness.

Taken In Hand style marriage is not easy for the husband, and it is not for every man. Even taking the simple steps above is a lot of work because requires you to listen much more carefully to your wife, to think hard about your marriage, and your plans for the future together.

But it is good to be king, and if your wife is suited, then a Taken In Hand style relationship, where the man actively controls the woman, really is to the delight of both.

I would never have thought that more active leadership is what my wife wanted in a marriage, but she is enthusiastic and now seeking more.⁴³³

"DISCOVERING WHO WE ARE" (3 DECEMBER 2010)

My wife and I have been married almost 20 years. We have tried many ways of relating and yet nothing worked with any reliability.

That is until we both began to recognize something in our natures.

I began to discover that I am what some would call an alpha male, and she a female needing to be in subjection to her man.

This was after I started to shed the baggage of being raised without a father. Being raised by my mother and only having sisters, no brother. My mother went through many marriages and I learned that when there was marital conflict there came separation and then divorce. As a result I had hole in my spirit that I didn't realize was there, yet it affected my life in negative ways for years to come.

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My wife's father died when she was eight. She was in the room when her dad had his heart attack at only 35. Then she had a stepfather who had raised boys to adulthood and now had a stepdaughter he didn't know how to relate to. Thus she was raised in a home with an overbearing and domineering father[®]. Yet, she deeply yearned in her heart for a man who could be strong without being overbearing—take charge without being domineering. But she couldn't put these needs into words. She didn't truly understand the hole in her spirit. She found some solace when she started reading D/s novels, when she discovered them in her late teen years. They excited her. She thought that she wanted what she was reading but they didn't fill that void.

Then we found each other. I had not had a history of successful relationships, due to my upbringing. I was a doormat, a wuss. I was always afraid that if I stood my ground that the young lady I was seeing would leave, just like my mother always did. This was a recipe for disaster and never, ever, worked.

Then I decided at 29 that I was sick of it and would not longer put up with female nonsense. It was very soon after this that I met my wife to be.

She tested me very early in the relationship and discovered that I wouldn't put up with her nonsense. Her mother said I was the first man that her daughter had ever dated. (Good thing she hadn't met me six months earlier)

My wife discovered someone she couldn't push around. A man, not a boy.

We were married six months later.

Then things started to go bad. We were married and my old upbringing started to intrude. I stopped being a man and became the boy, afraid to stand my ground, in fear that she would leave.

Taking a chance she told me about the kind of books she started reading as a teen. About interests that she had. In her confused state she thought that she wanted what was in those books. So, I, who had never read those kind of books started to read them. I started studying them. I found online communities. Trying to figure her out. We started trying out the things we read about. But it never filled that void we both had in our hearts and spirit.

I was still afraid she would leave me and she was afraid of a man who would crush her spirit.

Eighteen years after our marriage, with two children, after years of a marriage that was frequently very bad, had very little, if any, sex, we started having deeper conversations than we ever had before, after I told her I couldn't take it any more. The only reason I hadn't left was that I didn't want to do to my children what was done to me.

In a way, we were both afraid, but we talked with a deeper understanding than we ever had before. I finally began to trust that she wouldn't run away. That I could be strong for her and not have to worry that she would leave me. This was when the true change started.

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When this happened I started the process of becoming the man she needed. A man who would not fall on her and crush her when she was upset about something. Who could take charge without being domineering or never looking out for her needs and wants. But someone she could trust her vulnerable side too. Someone who could take burdens off of her shoulders and put them on his own. Someone she could trust to look out for her, protect her, put her needs, not wants, ahead of his own. Her needs and those of their children.

I finally became the Man she needed, which released her to become the woman she was, deep down in her heart. I found out by becoming what she needed that hidden deep down in myself that I truly was that man.

This filled that void that was in both of us. The one that we both had left empty out of fear and ignorance for so long.

I needed a woman who would welcome my control, whom I could lead and she would follow. Who would be subject to me and whom I could take care of and cherish as my very own.

She needed a Man whom she could trust her most vulnerable side to. Who would stand up to her and for her. Whose rule was Law. Who would keep her under control and under his authority and protection.

This is also not just in how we live our daily lives now, it has roiled over into our sex life as well. In a way it began there. I no longer have to ask, or worse, beg her for sex, and more often than not be turned down. She has had the burden, as she de-

scribes it, of initiating sex lifted from her shoulders. The burden of deciding if she will have sex or not. Now, I just take what I want from her sexually. I, not her, say when, where, and what kind of sex we will have. The choice of this has been taken away from her and she is absolutely delighted as a result. This is how she has always wanted it, but couldn't verbalise it. In fact this is what she has always needed from her man. From me. It fits her personality like a hand in a glove, and it suits me as well, now that we can trust one another. As I often say to her: Obedience is sexy!

We have found in ourselves and in our mate the person we have always needed and in turn have become the people we truly are.

The irony here is that this was before I discovered Taken In Hand. If I had found articles like "The subjection of women" I truly believe that we would have found our way to where we are sooner.⁴³⁴

"I'M NOT SUPPOSED TO TELL YOU THIS..." (17 DECEMBER 2010)

I'm going to spill the beans and let you know what is going on in the mind of many men. I'm not supposed to do this, but hopefully this will be anonymous enough that I won't pay a personal price for letting the cat out of the bag.

A lot of times we feel like we are competing against somebody or something. Against other guys, against co-workers, against our kids, against our friends, even against the expectations others have for us (as

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well as our own expectations). Sometimes we don't even know what we are competing against and just feel we are in contest against life.

We do not want to show weakness or let others know let others know where the chinks in our armour are. That makes it easier for others to come out on top instead of us. Our self esteem and even our identity are directly tied to our perception of how well we compete. Rejection and failure make us feel like losers which is nearly unbearable so we avoid them.

This is why men respond so well to praise and affirmation. This is why men can find it hard to let a woman into his heart where he is defenceless against her. This is why he might avoid commitment to things he is not absolutely sure are within his ability. Competition can be good, but it can be unhealthy at times too, especially in the arena of relationships.

This feeling of competition is also why it is so powerful in a man's life when the woman he lives totally surrenders herself to him, it is the greatest victory ever, the only victory that really counts in the end. With that victory, he can let go of the need to compete when it isn't constructive, secure in the love of his love. He can risk more, love more, open up to you more without the fear of winding up feeling like a loser.

So, a big part of him *wants* to take his woman in hand, but at the same time, if he were treated that way it would make him feel like a loser, so he can't fathom his wife wanting to be treated like that. He loves her and

so he is caught between these conflicting emotions, wanting it for his sake, not wanting it for her sake. You have to convince him that you want it, only because he is looking at the way he would feel if the roles were reversed, not because he is a wimp of some kind.⁴³⁵

"MOVIE REVIEW: STARDUST" (20 DECEMBER 2010)

Stardust is a great Taken in Hand themed movie that I'm sure you all will love.

It was not heavily promoted when it came out in 2007, many people have never even heard of it, but it is a gem. It is a fantasy/adventure/romance starring Claire Danes and Charlie Cox, with Michelle Pfeiffer and Robert De Niro in key roles.

SPOILERS AHEAD

The story follows the life of Tristan, a young man living in a 1800's-ish English town named Wall, due to the a long wall running alongside the town. There is a gap in the wall that is guarded day and night so that none may pass, and local legend is it that the land beyond is strange. In fact on the other side of the wall is a magical kingdom of Stormhold.

Tristan shop boy who is madly in love with the beautiful Victoria, he lacks some self confidence but still tries to win her in his awkward way. She is more interested in the confident and wealthier Humphrey but she enjoys being chased and likes that she can wrap Tristan around her finger and make him do what

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she wants. She does this to the point of causing him to lose his job in fact.

On the day he loses his job he takes her out on a nighttime picnic, including champaign. As she sits there noting that it must have cost him all his savings to do this she casually tells him that Humphrey is going to propose marriage to her next week on her birthday and she intends to accept. Humphrey is already on the way to Ipswitch to get the ring.

Tristan tells her that for her hand he would go much further, and about that time they see a star fall, landing far off on the other side of the wall. Tristan gets Victoria to agree that if he can go and fetch the fallen star for her by her birthday, that she will marry him instead.

When he gets to the star, it turns out that in Stormhold a fallen star is not a rock, but a woman. He uses a magical chain he acquired to chain her by the ankle and lead her back to see Victoria. Needless to say the star, named Yvaine, is not very willing or happy about all this.

There are others in pursuit of Yvaine since eating the heart of a star can restore youth and extend life by centuries, perhaps even to immortality. When Yvaine escapes from Tristan she quickly falls into the hands of one of her pursuers, but Tristan gets her out of there only to land them both in the thick of other problems.

Unlike with Victoria, Tristan is not afraid to take charge of things and Yvaine falls deeply in love with him as he controls, defends and protects her. An emotional high point comes at a time where she thinks he

can't hear what she is saying. She confesses her love and fully pledges herself to him in no uncertain terms, with no limits or qualifiers. I'm sure every guy who sees that part wishes his wife would say what she says there if she hasn't already.

Later on he admits that he heard what she said, and confesses that he loves her too, but in the morning he is gone when she wakes up. A miscommunication leads her to think that Tristan intends to carry on with his original plan. Heartbroken but obedient she sets off alone for the nearby wall to be presented to Victoria, not realizing that once she leaves the land of Stormhold, she will become nothing more than a rock...

There is a LOT I've left out of course. The movie is so great in so many ways It has lots of action, humour, and romance and is a perfect date night movie to watch together. It shouldn't be too hard to find at a local video store, but you might want to buy it instead.⁴³⁶

"I WON'T SETTLE FOR ANYTHING LESS" (16 JANUARY 2011)

My life had been filled with mostly ordinary conventional relationships, which, after the passion wore off, always seemed to leave me cold and bored. It never even occurred to me that I wasn't getting what I needed. So used to pleasing others, I just assumed that if they were getting what they wanted that all was well, and if I became disinterested... well... then there was something wrong with me. I didn't realize until after I ended my last serious relationship

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and reviewed our sexual history how deeply unsatisfied I was with it.

Our society has done such a good job of shaping our views of ourselves in regards to sex and pleasure and relationship that when you first start to step out of that box it can be a very confusing and sometimes lonely place. We, for the most part, must make our own places in those areas of our lives and live with the fact that they are not restricted by social norms.

I began exploring the aspects of my nature that pointed towards a control-based relationship and found it difficult to accept. I am a female born of a very feminist generation...and so it's difficult to determine what place the feminine strength I have has in this type of relationship.

Which is where Taken In Hand came into my life. I was immediately drawn to the fact that here was a community full of articles that included aspects of this life that I was finding confusing and enjoyable. I absolutely love the variety of the different ways that these relationships have been shaped to fit couples' individual needs, and that there is absolutely no set standard, or recrimination when people express themselves and what works for them. It is just accepted that... here is a recipe different from everyone else's with one or two very key common ingredients.

Taken In Hand...such an apt name to encompass this subtle dance of control...and what I consider to be intuitive love. HERE was what I'd been craving, and things started to make so much more sense.

After reviewing my past relationships I realized that I'd only been with what could only be considered weaker men. Men who did not have alpha male qualities, and I was able to see how that one element led to the decline of each relationship. It begins with a lack of respect and ends with me being over-burdened because the man that I'm with isn't strong enough, doesn't have enough integrity or isn't intuitive enough to know that I need to be reined in. It is my natural inclination to do too much and between the two types of men there are those who will let me go while piling even more atop my load, and then there are those who will instinctively know what I need, even when I am unable to ask. Who will give me the gifts of security, honesty, integrity, strength, calm, and even restriction when I need it in response to my gifts of generosity, emotional support, nurturing, obedience.

"Obedience." A word that has gained a deeper and more complex meaning for me over these last weeks of delving into Taken In Hand. Again, something that a strong woman needs to, in the most serious sense of the words, come to terms with. How do we fit with this word and maintain our strength, our individuality? An issue that many women have brought up. I was relieved to see so many articles addressing these very same concerns, to know that I was not alone in my confusion.

In my unconscious search for this type of relationship I had the misfortune of tumbling headlong into a relationship that had the control

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elements but where they were employed with cruelty, manipulation... where having that control taken from me instilled not a sense of trust and wellbeing but instead a feeling of mental rape and a complete loss of control. For someone like me... who needs so much the feeling of security in my life... without the knowledge that I can hand the control to someone that I respect and trust, having it taken from me makes me off balance, out of sorts. Like I'm free falling with nothing to grab onto. I think that's a huge reason why trust is such a large element in these types of relationships. I'm noticing that alot of women who are drawn to this lifestyle are in fact, independant women who are very much in control of their lives. I think that's why there is such confusion initially as to what do we do with these feelings? It's very difficult for us to think about giving up that control until we have the experience of being in a relationship with someone that we trust so much that it becomes ok in our minds to hand over the burden... knowing without a doubt that Things Will Be Taken Care Of, including ourselves.

Which brought me to wondering where the idea of feminism really fits in with Taken In Hand, and if in fact, this isn't indicitive of a more widespread problem in relationships across the board. I truly wonder how many people out there naturally lean towards this type of relationship and were they to come across Taken In Hand would find themselves agreeing with or becoming even clearer about what they might

have been searching for. What might be missing in their lives.

I honestly believe that in the beginning, feminsim was a necessary tool in every aspect of our lives. Society had been structured in such a way as that in order to gain respect in the workforce they had to fight for it. Equal pay, equal opportunity. In their households. Appreciation for all they did as far as the monumental task it is to keep a household running smoothly. And in their own minds. The power that comes from knowing that not only can you do all these things, but that it matters. You can make effective decisions.

I believe that there came a time, however, when the struggle began to shift and the idea of feminism did not shift with it. Women were beginning to be taught that they must be strong. You must remain strong in all areas of your life. Certain things are considered to be a weakness and if you display them, you will be taken advantage of. Allowing a man to open a door for you, allowing a man to make any kind of decision for you. It's wrong to think of ANYTHING as being "a man's job". Our feminism stopped serving us and began enslaving us, not to our men, but to our own minds and our own sense of responsibility. Men actually started pulling back. An overwhelming attitude of "well if she insists that she can do it all, why not let her" began to emerge. This is something that I am still witnessing in relationships and it's getting worse the younger the people in the relationship.

It's time for feminism to be recognized for what it has or should have

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grown into. A total appreciation and respect for feminine strength. I'm not talking about "whatever you can do I can do better", either. I'm talking about respecting a woman's strength in making decisions regarding her life, her ability to get things done, but the key ingredient that is missing from so many women's lives... the appreciation and respect of the vulnerability and delicacy of her female essence. It's still there. There is still strength and power in that most delicate aspect of the feminine. It's buried, though, under the misguided attitude that we women need show no weakness, that we must be able to Do It All.

I think that that's what makes the men who make Taken In Hand relationships work, so valuable. I see a pattern with these men. They are typically men who want a strong woman. Someone who in her outside life can display intelligence, integrity, strength, motivation. Something that our generations of feminism has cultivated in us. No longer will we bow down to others' opinions of us, expectations of subservience in the workplace, in social situations.

The subtle submission comes in when a woman walks through the door into her intimate emotional life with her partner. This new feminism is the contentment that a woman can experience when she comes home to a man who will unzip her outer suit of armor that must be worn in our day-to-day hectic lives, and allow the strong yet delicate female to emerge. It's a vulnerability because it's that strength without reinforcements. It's transparency. It's falling

backwards knowing that your partner will be there to catch you. It is allowing your partner to worship your beauty and softness as much as you worship his strength and assuredness. It is the epitome of the yin and yang symbol.

I believe that there is also an element of intuitiveness that men of this nature possess, or learn to cultivate, that sets them apart from the rest. Women are naturally intuitive. We use it every day, in regard to the ones we love, knowing what they want and need. Men, I think, have let go of the responsibility for knowing what their partner needs. I'm not talking about complete mind reading, or no communication. Obviously communication is key in any relationship, but in a Taken In Hand relationship unspoken communication is more common. The groundwork has been laid, the necessary attention has been paid for both partners, but more so even for the man since he is in charge to know what his woman wants and needs. To know what is best for her, even when she doesn't know herself. An article that I especially enjoyed here mentioned that in her household control and obedience meant not just doing what she was told for someone else, but was just as much obeying when told to get into a bubble bath and relax, which sometimes is just as equally difficult for us. THAT is your partner being intuitive, and knowing what you need. THAT is the trust that brings great contentedness within a woman when she knows that her partner is paying attention to her, and can take the responsibilities from her when she

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isn't willing or able to give them up. Whether that is in the form of a spanking or a bubble bath...that's where the differences in each relationship and each individual needs start to emerge.

So far, these are my observations and feelings that I've been exploring. I have yet to step into a Taken In Hand relationship completely but coming here has brought me farther than I've ever been in being able to firmly determine what it is that I want and need out of a relationship and it is guaranteed that now that I know, I won't settle for anything less. I look forward to the continued learning process and the time that will come when I am able to craft a relationship to fit myself as well as have some of the others that I observe on this site.⁴³⁷

"MY HUSBAND BEING IN CHARGE HELPS IN STRESSFUL TIMES" (18 FEBRUARY 2011)

Taken In Hand has been truly a revelation for me and my husband in many ways. But one benefit I'm noticing now is how having this kind of relationship helps when I'm stressed and sleep-deprived.

We're moving house, and it's my job to pack everything and do all the things you have to do when moving house, and I need to get all that done while doing all the other things I do every day (working, kids, ailing parents who need a lot of help, my own health problems). I've got a lot on my plate right now, and I'm not sleeping enough and I'm exhausted.

My husband works extremely hard for us and he too has multiple burdens and stressors.

Last weekend I was so tired and overwhelmed that I was hardly able to do anything. Definitely an example of how trying to do too much leads to less getting done. I was feeling so stressed and sleep-deprived that I was unable to think. I told my husband he shouldn't give me any complex orders as I'm down to the intelligence level of my husband's dog (not the brightest animal on the planet, it has to be said—but not to my husband—he loves that dog!).

My husband saw that my functionality had indeed been reduced in my overwhelmed state, and he naturally fell into removing some of my burdens. He didn't do that by taking over what I was trying to do—that wouldn't have helped in this case *at all*. He did it by talking to me the way he talks to his dog!

He loves that dog and is very indulgent with her! He started petting my head, speaking to me how he speaks to his dog, and whenever I completed one of my tasks he said "Good girl" in a very encouraging voice, just like he says it to the dog when (for once) she manages to obey his orders.

If you're a woman, you may be reading this and spluttering in outrage at the idea of being treated like a dog—and if you're a husband, I wouldn't recommend this idea as a general rule, but at the time, I really was feeling that my stress and lack of sleep had reduced my mental capacity to that of my husband's dimwitted dog, so my husband's playful but also very gentle and lov-

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ing teasing made me giggle in acknowledgement. It also made me relax and stop fighting my diminished capacity. It was strangely soothing! Of course I know that my husband deeply respects my intellect, and we've been together a long time, so I did not feel at all insulted, just amused by how he handled the situation.

Then, in accepting my state instead of fighting it, I started asking my husband if I should do one task or another, and leaving it to him to decide what I should do next. That was surprisingly relaxing, and my husband was surprisingly good at knowing what needed to be done next. My asking my husband what I should do next led to my husband starting to tell me what to do in a much more micromanaging way than usual, and despite my exhaustion, I started to find it all very erotic, which woke me up and cheered me up and helped my productivity no end!

Normally, being treated like the dog and bossy micromanagement would not work for us. It would feel ridiculous and annoying and I'd tell my husband where to stick it (and no doubt if that ever were to happen I'd be made to regret those words later!). But last weekend it was the best thing my husband could have done for me. It made me feel so relaxed and cared for that it actually increased my ability to get everything done.

A large part of my incapacity had been the mental stress of thinking about the millions of tasks I had to do. What my husband did effectively released me from my dysfunction

tional worrying and turned what had started as a hellish day into a day in which I completed many more tasks than I had anticipated completing.

My husband's brilliant handling of me that day started as a gentle joke to make me smile, then soothed and relaxed me, and finally, it aroused me and made me want my husband physically despite all the stressors and lack of sleep.

For me, the fact that my husband is fully in charge in our marriage and becomes more bossy when the situation naturally calls for it but doesn't playact bossiness artificially, is tremendously erotic. In our general day-to-day lives you might not notice my husband's control unless you were looking for it—I am not an irresponsible person and indeed my husband would be the first to stress that I am super-competent, so most of the time I don't need to be micromanaged—but my husband's control is there all the time, and he tells me what to do or not do whenever he considers it necessary, even if it means treating me like a dog.⁴³⁸

"HOW COOL IS THAT?" (24 FEBRUARY 2011)

After reading this site for almost a year and having many conversations, we recently started down our own road towards a Taken In Hand relationship.

We have been married for 23 years and together for almost 30 (we met in high school), so we have a really firm foundation to build upon. We've had many ups and downs

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over the years and a few rare times even wondered if we should go our separate ways. But overall, we've had a good life together. Our kids are almost grown and we have hit a nice stride of really loving, understanding and appreciating one another.

Yet, we wanted more. I felt like I wasn't being true to myself or fair to my husband in the role I had taken on in our marriage. For various reasons, I took on the leadership role for our household and our relationship. It wasn't until I read the articles on this site that it all clicked into place for me and I realized why I got so angry when Mr L let me walk all over him. I didn't do this all the time, we mostly got along fine, but 95% of the arguments we had were based on resentment I felt because Mr L didn't stand up for himself and that he let me and others take advantage of him. Because he wasn't strong, I felt like I couldn't completely put my trust in him. I felt like I was holding back a part of me from him and I feared that he was holding back a part of himself from me. To make matters worse, this was all left unsaid. We weren't very good at communicating with each other about matters of the heart.

It may sound as if Mr L is a wimpy type of person, and so what would make me think he would want to be in a Taken In Hand relationship? Like many people he is a complex person. In the early part of our relationship, he showed more of his dominant traits and over time, he gave away (or let me inadvertently take) more and more power from him. This happened partly because

he was in a job that took him away from the home often and for weeks at a time and when he would return I would have everything running just so and he felt like it would be disruptive to jump in, so he just stayed out of it more and more until I resented him jumping in when he did try to and I also resented him for not trying to jump in when he didn't. It was also because he thought that was what I wanted and really one of his biggest goals is to make me happy.

Luckily, his job changed and he no longer had to travel as much but our roles had already been defined. Life was busy, we had kids, a house etc and years went by. We were mostly happy but didn't feel as close as we once did, but we chalked it up to middle age and a hectic life.

Enter Taken In Hand. We had been experimenting a little with erotic spanking and I was starting to realize the feelings that his being dominant in the bedroom were provoking in me. It made me think of how he had been in the early years of our relationship and how our dynamic had changed so much since then. I knew he had it in him to be head of the household because he had exhibited head of the household behavior when we were first married and just seemed so much more confident at that time. I realized that we had been in a bad vicious cycle. My taking on the leadership role made him feel less valued. That made his self confidence go down and he felt less capable of stepping up at home and at work. He didn't really feel needed. And my being the leader made me feel like I had the weight of our

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lives on my shoulders and that I was the only one I could trust to captain our ship. Ironically, we both wanted the same thing but we never realized it. I wanted to be able to lean on him and trust him to steer our ship and he wanted me to need him, to look up to him. We both wanted a deeper, more meaningful relationship.

It was only after I stumbled upon the Taken In Hand website that this all became clear and after much reading and talking, we knew what course we wanted to take.

The most amazing thing is how much deeper and fulfilling our relationship has become. Part of it has to do with the fact that we are communicating so much more. He says that communication is so important especially for a Taken In Hand relationship because of the power differential. I need to know what he expects and he needs to understand my needs. It sounds so simple, but it is so profound. We have talked more often and more honestly about our feelings, desires, hopes and fears in the last few months than we have in the last 29 years combined. That alone has brought us so much closer. Plus, he was always a man of few words and now that he is sharing more I am even more in love with who he is because I know more of who he is and he is amazing.

The results of our change are overflowing into every aspect of our lives. We are both so much happier being who we really are. Our sex life has been incredible, we are so in love, and it is a vicious cycle of good now instead of bad. He's been taking more of an active role with the kids and his perspective is such a

great addition to our household. And just this week he had something come up at work that he would have had a really hard time dealing with pre Taken In Hand, and frankly probably would have procrastinated about for months, but he took it by the horns right away and calmly and professionally dealt with it with great results. All of this has boosted his confidence in himself (and mine in him), he feels my love and admiration everyday and now our favorite thing is to lie in bed with me in his arms and just talk.

I hope this doesn't sound like he is the only one doing all the work and changing. I'm doing my part too. It has been hard to give up being in charge and getting my way all the time. He says he wants to go slowly, so he hasn't taken over everything but he has taken over me! We are working on my attitude towards him and I am trying to be respectful even when things aren't going smoothly. (Much harder than it sounds!) I'm also trying not to tell him how to drive! (also really hard!) We never had lots of arguments and I never (well, hardly ever) treated him that badly, but now I am so much more aware of how I speak to him especially in front of the kids. I've noticed positive affects of my new attitude at work too. I have been able to think first and then speak(or not speak) much more often than before Taken In Hand.

The interesting part is that I thought I might like the spanking aspect, but I realize that I am actually pretty submissive and once I know where the line is, it is very

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hard to make myself cross it (which I don't want to do anyways, because why would I purposely disappoint Mr L?) Plus the few times that I thought I might have crossed that line, I was really quite worried about what might happen next and incredibly relieved that he didn't decide to spank me, even though we both agreed that he could. (I'm sure it will happen sooner or later and then we'll know for sure if we want that to be an aspect of our relationship or not). I find that I just really want to make him happy and to do things for him all the time. He says he feels the same way. He has been texting me silly poems and we email back and forth often during the day just to say we love each other. I feel so fortunate.

All in all, it's been so great to rekindle our love and to start to create an even deeper and more meaningful relationship where we are both giving all of ourselves and exposing all of ourselves to each other. We are honest with each other now and know each other's deepest feelings. We trust each other and value the different things that we each bring to our relationship. And we have an overwhelming desire to be together and make our relationship the best that it can be.

How cool is that?⁴³⁹

"TAKING MYSELF IN HAND: A PERSONAL JOURNEY WITH SHARED RESULTS" (2 MAY 2011)

Stressed by arguments between my husband and myself, I searched the internet for helpful sites and

advice. I'm grateful for finding Taken In Hand, and I think implemented quietly and deliberately in my own way, taking myself in hand will ease my husband's and my mental health and peace of mind.

Generally, my husband and I are mature, happy and energetic people. Generally, we would not seek marriage counselling or would either of us consult a therapist, really, for anything. However...

We can fight a lot and a few times, our arguments have nearly torn us apart. Such extreme fights leave me feeling weak, broken and hopeless. For my husband, I think fighting leaves him feeling trapped in a marriage filled with rage, mis-trust and unpredictability.

We have a few problems, real issues, that we need to sort out. Financial-type things, with work and money. Buying a house and my pregnancy have also added stress to our lives, although of course, these are beautiful and good things we both want in our lives.

Nevertheless, somehow we let these problems boil over into something that seethes, that elicits disrespectful comments and silent treatment and makes us walk a little bit away from our relationship. I'm sorry to say that I often cause the fights, even if the problems are shared. I am a little more high-strung, a little more nervous than my husband, who usually is calm, with a trust in the future and our ability to progress.

So I want to change my behaviour in subtle ways. I don't want to fight with my husband anymore. I don't

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want to pick and argue where it's not necessary. While either one of us may find a situation provocative, I want to learn to let things go, to be peaceful, and generally, to let my husband guide us. My methods or preferences may be right; but his may also be right, and I have learned in this world, there are many ways to go about living. But two people who share a life and want to raise a family might be better off with one person in charge.

While I loved being in charge of my own life when I was single, I think life might be sweeter and our relationship much smoother, if ultimately, I let my husband's will prevail. He's not a demanding man anyway and has shown great respect for my intelligence and ingenuity. But when we have discussed a situation and he feels right about his course, I need to learn how to let go. And I need to let go of the small things, the minor differences in our attitudes or choices. I want him to feel in charge of his own private life and of our shared life. I may provide advice and opinion, but my Love should feel that his word will stand and that I trust he has made a conclusion logically and with our well-being first-and-foremost.

I don't know what my husband would think of Taken in Hand. I wonder if he would find it old-fashioned, or think that I wish to crush my spirit or even that I am using an alibi to load the responsibilities on him. The article, "Effect positive change by acting as if..." is sort of where my thinking is at. I want to behave better. I want to be a better wife to my husband and I

want to find ways to get along without losing myself or alienating my husband.

I can learn my lessons and even be brought through Noone's four stages of spanking through mere conversation and stern talkings-to. I do not need to be spanked. I have been broken by argument and want never to go down that path again.

So for me, exploring Taken In Hand is personal, a journey for myself to find peace and mental well-being and to maintain and grow the love and respect my husband and I have always had for each other. Yet as personal as this journey may be, I think the results will be shared between us. I expect my husband will subconsciously react to my new behaviour. I think he will find that his word stands and that I respect him greatly. I believe that the more I "act as if", the more he will find that I am in in his hands.⁴⁴⁰

"FROM ABJECT LOSER TO YOUNG MAN" (18 SEPTEMBER 2011)

"A man who loves like a woman becomes a slave. This is the Nice Guy." —Pook

Before commencing, it might be helpful for the reader to visualize the person who is telling the story. Imagine an ectomorph. An ectomorph whose upper body muscles show through his intentionally tight clothing, with really high powered glasses and a rather goofy looking face, pockmarked with pimple scars from back in the day when I was trying to tell myself "appearance

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shouldn't matter", and thus didn't do a thing about. My name is Andrew, age 22 as of writing, and I have lost to a girl I liked in an arm wrestling match (ok she is right handed and I am left handed but still). Let's be honest here ladies—if it weren't for the way I carry myself, you would probably not think that I am the type of guy who has even heard about a Taken in Hand relationship, let alone be capable of one.

Foresight teaches gently—error teaches brutally

My first success with females was when I was in primary. In 3rd grade I remember following around a girl that I liked. She despised me. I remember wondering "hmm I was supposed to be thoughtful and caring; why isn't this working?"

Throughout middle and high school there was a girl I really liked, but I never made a move on. This was the girl I lost to in arm wrestling. Later on it turned out she liked my friend, and dated him for a while. That was not fun. The first lesson was taught—but I did not learn it. It was:

"Rejection is better than Regret"

While I was in middle school, I attended some local event. I was extra confident that day, and it showed. I went up to all the girls and asked for their names before the event started. I did nothing else worthy of mention, but all the guys looked up to me and all the girls were eyeing me. A girl whom I did not know told me to sit next to her at the very back of

the bus. We became fast friends and she took me to dinner with her family. I had a feeling that she liked me, but I didn't act upon it because I was afraid that my true self would show, namely that I'm a loser at middle school and the friendly, outgoing person she saw in the local event was just a one off. Out of all the girls with whom I swapped email addresses with after the event, she was the only one I remembered. This is also why I think ladies should take initiative sometimes, because it makes you stand out.

This episode really puzzled me. I thought I had lost it forever when it came to girls. So how was it that I somehow managed to become the life of the event that particular day? Was I really, at heart, a natural at this?

I also had another run in with the oddities of females when I asked a girl I didn't know for her hand at a dance party. We danced... not very well, but I imagine she thought that I liked her. Which might explain why, after a few days of me not doing anything after the party, all her friends started to hate me. I guess you're not supposed to dance with a girl if you're not interested in her?

In High School I found that the social hierarchy was based on popularity, and surprisingly, my natural personality placed me at the oddities table, far, far away from where all the hot chicks were. In order to climb up the ladder, I tried on many mannerisms. I picked up the bad habit of brain farts, I sometimes acted like I was on Prozac because I thought that would make me more popular (it didn't), I sometimes

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made stupid and immature comments. Needless to say this did not work.

And so in this confused way I graduated and went to university. My brain still shuts down whenever I want to talk to a beautiful woman (as it has been wont to do since 1st grade). Yet I kept my standards impossibly high. A lot of people say “why go for a beautiful woman when you can have a caring loving woman?” and I always respond with “why can’t I have both?”

Yes, why couldn’t I have both? I realized at this point that my behaviour was getting me nowhere. It takes a certain humility to buckle down and admit that yes, I am bad at attracting women—something that so many other guys are afraid to admit. Yes, I need help. And so with my best companion and friend since 3rd grade, the personal computer, I set off in search for help on the seas of the Internet.

“You are the Great Catch.”

I first signed up on Sosuave in 2008, but that was after reading David DeAngelo’s *Cocky & Funny* and Neil Strauss’s *The Game*. I downloaded Mystery’s TV show. Tried the Apocalypse Opener at a club, to a resounding failure. I followed David DeA’s advice on banishing approach anxiety, which was to go up to random chicks on the street and tell them you were practicing talking to attractive women. That was a good one. I like C&F—it’s natural and always gets a good reaction. When I approach women, I feel like I am “the man”. But it soon felt like a

job. Whenever I saw an attractive woman, I just had to approach her, or I would feel like I was lapsing into the old ways, and no longer “the man”. This subtle sense of insecurity bugged me and I could never feel like “the Great Catch”. Plus I realized that a lot of these “techniques” were actually my natural behaviour during the local event at which I was so popular in middle school. Eventually it all fell by the side and I forgot about it for some time.

I drifted along until sometime last year, my friend broke it to me with some hard love. I had no social status. I acted like an overly Nice Guy in front of the girl I liked. I wasn’t studying. I didn’t take good care of myself. I wear my heart on my sleeve (sometimes I use this to my advantage). I am too easy to read. And a few other things that I don’t quite remember, or probably didn’t want to keep in mind.

It hurt, but it was true. I never really got the urge to study, but eventually, I managed to drag myself into doing pushups every 2 days to build muscle, to take care of those pimples on my face, to shower every day, learning to insult each other wittily, and most importantly to me, to start reading those dating advice books again. This time, I also read dating advice for women. And I read Casanova’s Memoirs.

“Ambitionless men are those who live like women. Ambitionless women are those who live the equality of men.”—Pook

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Casanova is very far removed from the pickup artists of today. He didn't memorize routines, memorize astrological trivia, learn palm reading, or try to break it down into a science/process. What he had was poetry, a sharp wit, very strong convictions, a way of forming social connections quickly and with a lot of people, and a frame of mind that made everything seem like an adventure. And he did live adventurously, going from place to place, meeting strange people, meeting extraordinary women, and getting his way with women anywhere, anytime, whether he was poor or rich. And every person who entered his life came away somehow enriched. Or at least, that's the impression his memoirs gave.

"Manners for men: direction of masculine strength, not the denial of it." —Pook

Casanova was also odd in that he had severe oneitis. Oneitis is when a pickup artist thinks that a particular girl is "the One". Usually what happens is then he starts to revert to his old self around her, thus making her lose all interest in him. All pickup artists avoid oneitis like the plague. They try to date lots of other women to get their mind off them. But Casanova seemed to get severe oneitis for some women, and they didn't care. In fact, they welcomed him with open arms (and legs)! Obviously there was a duality going on here—women like seeing the soft side of masculine men! And the pickup artists, because they used to fall in love too soon with a woman,

now overreact and try to never show that they love a woman. This also works on a physical level. Watch *Le Samourai*, which stars Alain Delon. Quiet, determined, always composed, yet something feminine about him. I think that's why women think he's attractive.

"Technique is nothing. Communication is everything. The 'techniques' that supposedly 'work' are nothing more than good communication of your desires and intention." —Pook

Shortly before reading Casanova's memoirs I had found a few posts by somebody on Sosuave called The Pook. Somebody had kindly compiled his posts into *The Book of Pook*. Pook's posts really resonated with me, because having read *The Game* when I first got into this study, I appreciated the importance of having inner game, i.e. being in touch with yourself, being a good, respectable character before searching for a woman. *The Game* specifically demonstrates how Mystery, despite his incredible powers of seduction, fails in keeping women because he is childish and attention seeking, incapable and scared of giving love. His Mystery Method is only a coat that he dons when he sarges. *The Game* also makes it clear that many males who play the speed seduction game fall into the narcissistic trap of hoarding numbers from women and having all of them; but only a select few rise above that, and realize that in order to get better women, they have to better themselves, not sharpen their "technique" or develop more routines.

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"Never Change Your Mind Just to Please a Woman"—Chapter 6, *The Way of the Superior Man*

Pook is all about improving and being true to oneself before meeting women. Much like David Deida's *The Way of the Superior Man* recommends, the focus is always more on the self, less on the woman. Casanova, although he never spelt it out explicitly, lived his life according to the same principle. Pook talks about being a man, and why women go for men and not Nice Guys—because men do not deny that they are male, while Nice Guys try to hide it by acting female. Meanwhile, as I'm sure all the females on Taken in Hand know, sexuality remains alive and well, but mostly only in romance novels.

The Book of Pook, *The Way of the Superior Man*, Casanova's *Memoirs, Men are from Mars; Women are from Venus*, and *The Game* all confirmed a nagging suspicion that when it comes to girls, there are no rules. No "wait x days before calling", no "absence creates fondness", "never say I love you within 3 months" (broke that rule successfully!), "be mysterious", "when she does this, do that". I would post more if I remembered them but the fact is I try not to read any more material that advocates "rules" with women, and I especially abhor *The Rules* by Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider. There are so many of them, for each differing situation, and each person has their own set of rules, that it's impossible and tiring to try and remember them all. Plus such posts always advocate

a sort of false front. And we all know women hate false fronts. This is why women are leery of men who admit that they learned *The Game*. They know that at some point, he was not being true to himself; he was just following a caricature of some other guy's behaviour. And if there was any doubt on the matter, listen to Mission #17 of the Victory Unlimited Show (I love how he mixes a military vibe into it). Now that's a guy who knows what women want.

Armed to the teeth with all this newfound knowledge, and having my confidence bolstered by re-reading *The Way of the Superior Man* on a regular basis, I started to ask out all the physically attractive girls I knew, and whom I knew had not put me in the list marked as "FRIENDS". In no particular order of physical attractiveness: the first was not interested. The second had a boyfriend. The third was a confirmed hit! I got straight to the point and asked her if she had a guy already. Remembering the Brad Pitt/Alain Delon duality, I wore my heart on my sleeve and slightly exaggerated my nervousness :D what, no harm getting your foot in the door!

What I found was a very quiet, very reserved, warm hearted and incredibly cute girl who never failed to reciprocate my feelings for her, and who also happened to be a total animal in bed. The one time she wronged me, she invested a lot of effort into rebuilding the relationship, in spite of a few hurtful sentences I hurled at her, and seeing her effort, I was touched and could not

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bring myself to say anything else of the sort. The one complaint I have is that I still do not know enough about her. She knows me better than I know her, but as my friend said, I make it easy for people to read me, so I suppose this is not surprising. I mention her because she unconsciously taught me a very important lesson:

Men are expected to lead.

At first I thought it was because of her personality—she is quiet and submissive after all. But I soon realized that it was a bit deeper than that. It was always up to me to push the boundaries as to where I could touch her—and her limits were imposed via a gentle repositioning of my hand. And if I stopped because of that, she would look up at me, confused. Now THAT was really confusing. And although we took turns on deciding where to go for dates, she would always be happiest when I was the one making the decisions. I had a faint idea that dates were mostly managed by men anyway, so I figured it had to be something other than her personality.

Now, a strange thing happens to a guy when he likes a girl very much. A man should always want to improve himself for himself. But when he is in love, a man will have the urge to improve himself for himself, and also for the girl that he likes. Read *Men are from Mars; Women are from Venus* by John Gray. Everything he says there is true on a very deep level. Deida's *The Way of the Superior Man* also shares common ideas with Mars/Venus. And so it came about that I was looking for ways to further improve myself when I came

across a post on Sosuave called "A Crash Course on Masculine Power". It opened with a quotation from this article, which was first published here on the Taken In Hand website. I found this quotation incredibly fascinating, and it felt like it was stolen from a written article, so I Googled the exact line. I had stumbled upon Taken in Hand.

"It seems that the most gifted Don Juans were the most miserable failures with women earlier in life. It is like when they found they couldn't have their way, they had to compensate by realizing and cultivating their faculties and talents. This is also true with geniuses." —Pook

It amazes me how mature, honest, and understanding people on Taken in Hand are. Totally different from Sosuave, but probably because there's a lot of females here too. Their ages also amaze me. Too many accounts of marriages going down the drain because the male has not yet learned to deal with the female, and the female wants the male to be strong enough to handle her and is disappointed that she married a male who isn't. I have no doubt that Pook has at one time or another read this site too. Like many posters on Taken In Hand, he blames feminism for the increasing "equality" between the sexes. The final pieces of the puzzle fall into place: Scarlett's puzzling reaction after being raped in *Gone with the Wind* makes sense; pickup artists acknowledge that girls throw out shit tests, but can't explain why; why jerks get the girls; and a line that my mother once said,

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but never emphasized, came to mind:

"Women want a man who is stronger than them."

Even if I had paid attention to it, I would probably have interpreted it in the physical sense. As it turns out, this nugget of gold went in one ear and out the other, much like the other trashy line "Girls like guys who have good grades". It's times like those I think my parents assume I'm retarded. Or maybe that was just a last ditch effort to get me to study.

"It is good for young men to read a post full of aphorisms." —Pook

Well I assure you I've studied the subject of women enthusiastically over the past few months, with more gusto than I could ever apply to schoolwork. Here are some of the things I've learned:

Women will never stop shit testing you.

"A woman often seems to test her man's capacity to remain unperturbed in his truth and purpose. She tests him to feel his freedom and depth of love, to know that he is trustable. Her tests may come in the form of complaining, challenging him, changing her mind, doubting him, distracting him, or even undermining his purpose in a subtle or not so subtle way. A man should never think his woman's testing is going to end and his life will get easier. Rather, he should appreciate that she does these things to feel his strength, integrity, and openness. Her desire is for his deepest truth and love. As he grows, so will her testing." —Chapter 15, *The Way of the Superior Man*

Pickup artists know that shit tests are a sign of interest! It's one of their probes to test a man's character. If she wasn't interested in you, she would not test your character. That is why now and then, they will throw you a shit test, and see if you still pass this month. It can be as simple as asking men for free drinks, or as bad as cheating. If the man does not establish boundaries quickly and decisively, he is seen as weak. The cheating woman will continue to use him for his money. The girl who is just starting to date a guy who lets her get away with a shit test will lose interest in him quickly, or use him as well. A married woman whose husband fails her tests builds resentment for him, and may or may not cheat. At a high level of game, a pickup artist passes shit tests unconsciously. A natural also passes shit tests unconsciously. I don't know if my girlfriend gave me any shit tests, but I assume I passed all of them.

Taken in Hand teaches that a woman needs a man they can trust to pass their shit tests. Then they will reward the man with even more trust. If they are married to men who let them do whatever they want, who do not take charge, they will lose attraction and either cheat, divorce messily, or devolve into a couple that simply lives together. The funny thing is that this is all subconscious, and even women do not know why they are losing interest in their men! Hence the much misused line "They don't know what they want". Pickup artists also acknowledge that women throw out

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shit tests, but they cannot explain why. Some of them think that women do it on a subconscious level.

Why do girls always go for the jerks, even though they say they want nice guys?

Because it is impossible to install a spine in a pansy. At least the jerk has a spine, and the girls hope they can set him straight. Unfortunately they do not know that it is impossible to change a person who does not want to change himself. Either that or strong men are in such short supply, they'll take their chances! Also jerks are usually jerks because of an inner insecurity. Young girls are usually not mature enough to look past the outward display of strength. I have never heard a woman describe "quiet confidence" as an attractive trait before coming to this board—and most women on this board seem to be above 30. I think that has something to do with it too.

"In high school, you thought women would 'mature' and stop liking the jocks or jerks. In college, you thought women would mature and dislike the frat boys, sports guys, and start to be attracted to Nice Guy. In your thirties, you thought that women were FINALLY wisening up. No, women didn't mature; they just ran out of don juans. No matter what her age or relationship status, a woman will look at those guys and LUST. Women indefinitely remain women."

This Pook's one failing: he accuses women at age 30 or above of settling for Nice Guys because they can no longer attract The Catch.

It is equally likely that they found a nice guy who has strength of char-

acter, a spine. It is not readily apparent with just a cursory glance. Of course there are wives who cheat. They cheat because they have married a New Age man, because they have settled. From the posts on Taken In Hand, I get the feeling that none of you in a Taken In Hand relationship would even dream of cheating on your husbands. And no husband in a Taken In Hand would tolerate cheating.

Nice Guys offer flowers, bad poetry, romantic gestures, gifts, and a listening ear to women in hopes that they will fall in love with them. Women only appreciate this emotional surrender if they like the guy. This is the male equivalent of a female throwing herself all over you from/at the first date. You think she is easy. And you don't want easy women.

Cocky & Funny works because it is an outward display of strength, and shows comfort in oneself. Unfortunately for too many clueless men, this is their only tool for attracting women, and C&F alone is generally not enough. Fortunately, David DeAngelo does not advocate memorizing lines and routines like Jeffries or Mystery. Instead he recommends a view of the world or a state of mind, from which C&F will flow naturally. I should know. I signed up for his newsletter (and got lots of spam on the side).

A lot of pickup artists sarge to reassure themselves that they are the man, that they are more attractive than the nice guys they used to be. The more numbers they get, the more "manlier", "accomplished" they are. Meanwhile a lot of women

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go to clubs to feel desired. The more desired a woman is, the more “feminine” she is. Women rank each other based on men’s desire for them. This is also why many women do not dump a boyfriend until they already have another one next in line.

Women generally don’t approach a guy. They just drop hints and expect the man to take the lead. I never understood why, neither do pickup artists elaborate on why (they just accept it as a matter of fact), but the women on Taken in Hand explain it very simply: if he is a take-charge man, he will come and say hi. If he doesn’t, then he is not take-charge, or he’s just not that into her, i.e. no big loss anyway. The more beautiful the woman, the more intimidating the cold approach. This is why

“Beauty is a shit test.” —Neil Strauss, *The Game*

Pickup artists train themselves to overcome approach anxiety, the really nervous feeling you get when approaching an attractive woman, or even worse, a group of women with the target. Often you start out by practicing striking up conversations with strangers. Rejection hurts. Some people try to cope by trying to get rejected as much as possible in the hopes that it will numb them. The Great Catch will see rejection either as a failure of the woman to read his character, i.e. she wasn’t good enough for him anyway. The other “Great Catch” is simply full of himself.

“A Rules marriage is forever” —Ellen Fein, *The Rules*

If a girl is into you or if you’re far along enough in the relationship, you can break pretty much any rule ever made, and she will forgive you for minor mistakes you make during the approach. And once she is convinced that you are truly strong, you have true core values, then you can break the rules and be weak/nice guyish in front of her. You can even break the “don’t rape a woman” rule, as numerous contributors on this site attest to. The only reason rules exist is to help n00bs along. Too many n00bs never outgrow the rules or realize that the rules were made to be broken.

Dating is a process of qualification. She tries to figure out your true character through shit tests. If you are given the chance to naturally display your confidence, bravery, and true values, and you pass it unconsciously, you gain instant interest from a lot of women, because you just passed a lot of their tests. The man also qualifies the female by taking her out and observing her behaviour in particular situations. The first person, who displays over-eagerness or a weakness in their qualification scheme, is the one who loses. Both sides must be satisfied that they have been tested equally thoroughly to ensure that their feelings will be appreciated. Patience in this stage is an indicator of a well developed qualification process and is well rewarded.

Attraction for males: The man filters based on physical attractiveness. When he sees an attractive chick, he has a desire to get to know this attractive chick more. In his early 20s

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Casanova likened this to a book with an attractive cover making one interested to read its contents. Even today men concur.

Attraction for females: Women filter based on strength of character. They want this strength of character because they want someone else to take charge, but this someone else must also be strong and disciplined enough not to abuse this privilege. Most girls mistake crudity of behaviour, rudeness, and a do or die attitude for strength of character, and so go for the jerks.

Men are made, not born. Inner strength, regardless of how one comes across it, is still inner strength.

"Most guys here are making it harder than it actually is. You do not have to become some mythical 'alpha male'. You don't need to play a 'Psychological Chess' with them. You don't have to have society in awe of you. You just have to simply go ask them out. Instead of facing this simple fact, we spit out and regurgitate 'alpha male' manifestos, treatises on women and society, and so on." — Pook

"The strangest thing has occurred to me on this forum. I came here looking for love but discovered life. Now, it is not a love for woman or women, it is more a love for life. Do you guys feel this way? It is like we have been given a second chance to get life right, a Second Life as gift." — Pook

I wouldn't dare say I know everything about women now. But I do know more about them than 95% of guys my age do, thanks to Taken in Hand. I also know that many people do not reach this level of under-

standing until they have gone through a divorce or two. That's why I'm posting here to support the site: to let you know that you have helped me immensely, and that I am thankful. I could never have figured this out on my own.

"I gave up trying to figure out 'how to get women' and 'understanding women' because I kept coming back to defining men. Just as you cannot define day without defining night, so too you cannot define women without defining men." — Pook

And now I must stop theorizing as I have been doing for a long time, and go out and apply all that I have learned. Many thanks to my parents, Neil Strauss, John Gray, David Deida, Sosuave and its members The Pook, Anti-Dump, Senior Fingers, Jay Julio etc., and of course, Taken in Hand and its legion of brutally honest women who are not afraid to voice their deepest desires despite all the detractors! I have a lot more left to give my girlfriend, and now I know what she will appreciate the most. Some will accuse me of reshaping myself to fit what women want, but what is a man, if not what women want? If real men are truly in such short supply as this site says, then I am glad that I have invested so much time into learning about this, especially at my age, for now I truly know that I am the Great Catch.⁴⁴¹

"I AM AN ANIMAL!" (11 OCTOBER 2011)

In our slow and fascinating journey towards a Taken In Hand rela-

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tionship, we have made an interesting (and rather obvious) discovery.

Mr Lucky and I are both analytical people. I have a background in science and studied Zoology in college. Lately, I have been putting the same analytical thought process to our relationship that I used when studying animal behavior and have come to some interesting conclusions.

Most importantly: We humans are animals too. Duh!

I recently realized that I am fairly predictable as far as my feelings where dominance is concerned. When Mr Lucky behaves in a dominant manner, I basically swoon. My desire for him escalates, I feel so much more love and respect for him and I can't even remember what it was that ever made me irritated with him. When Mr Lucky caves in to my demands or backs off when I push him, my feelings for him quickly sink to frustration and resentment, and I start to see flaws in him and his every step.

How can my feelings for the same person swing in such a manner? Am I just shallow? No! I am an animal. I have self awareness and the ability to analyze myself and the world around me, but on a very base level I am still governed by the same innate laws that other animals are governed by. Surprisingly, survival of the fittest still plays into my modern life in a very real way.

In studying dominance hierarchies in birds while I was in college, it was apparent that a dominance hierarchy was never static. Individuals with less dominance would often challenge individuals with more dominance in order to move up the ladder.

Every interaction between individuals was a test to see who would come out on top. If the more dominant bird lost a challenge, he was more likely to lose more challenges and move down the chain of command.

One outcome of a male being higher in the hierarchy is often that of mating with a high ranking female. Females are most attracted to the most dominant male of the species. It is an innate part of most male-female animal dynamics. Female birds probably don't analyze why they are more attracted to the most dominant males, but the result is that dominant males are statistically more fit than less dominant males and better able to provide food, shelter and protection than less fit males which usually results in reproductive success, survival of more offspring, and ultimately more genes passed on to the next generation.

I have come to the conclusion that I, too, am governed by these same principals. Perhaps in us Taken In Hand inclined women, these innate feelings are stronger or closer to the surface than in other women of our times.

I now realize that every interaction Mr Lucky and I have is in essence a test of our fitness. Like it or not, when I "win", he diminishes himself on our dominance hierarchy and I go up a rung. I never thought of it that way before. It makes me realize how important it is as we create our Taken In Hand relationship that base as it may be, he wins the vast majority of these interactions. And it clarifies why I can be feeling great about the direction of our Taken In

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Hand relationship one minute and then a few words later I am feeling frustrated and resentful.

I have been questioning why I want him to continually prove to both of us that he is dominant. But now these feelings make more sense to me. Especially in this biological context.

We have been struggling with the best ways for Taken In Hand to manifest itself in our relationship. Especially on how to establish his dominance in the first place. We know we both desire him to be the Head of our household, but how do we go about making that happen on a practical level? Now we realize that a good start really is as simple as him trying to "win" every challenge between us.

Yesterday, we were at our son's soccer game and sitting on one side of the field. Partway through the game, Mr lucky said that at half-time he wanted to move to the other side of the field. I said "and leave me here all alone on this side?" and he replied "no, you'll be coming with me". I replied by saying "no". And he said "okay" and we both stayed on the original side.

That put me in a funk. I really wanted him to push back and say, "You WILL be coming to the other side of the field with me." That was when I realized that every little interaction is an unconscious test of his "fitness" and because he allowed me to "win" I was more fit than him in that instance.

You could argue that he was just being nice and listening to my desires, but he knows that I really didn't feel a huge need to sit in one

place or the other, so it would have been a relatively easy place for him to draw a line in the sand and show that he could dominate me if he wanted/needed to.

Of course I could have just said okay let's move, but lately since we are still trying to swap positions in our relationship, so that he becomes head of household, these types of seemingly insignificant interactions have taken on a greater importance. Now I think we both understand why.

Simplistic as it seems, we both feel that looking at our relationship from an "animal" perspective has cast more light on the why's of our desires and on what we need to do to establish his dominance and take our relationship to the next level.⁴⁴²

"HOW MY HUSBAND TOOK ME (IN HAND)" **(6 DECEMBER 2011)**

I dated my husband for one year before we got married. While we were dating I noticed how dominant he was by just the things he said. If I said something that he didn't like he would say "Don't get cheeky with me." But there was this one occasion when my husband was so bossy that it made me quiver.

We were having an argument and I got really cheeky. While we were arguing the phone rang so he walked towards it to answer it. While he walked towards it, I mumbled something cheeky. Before he answered the phone, he turned around to me and said, "What did you say?" I said "Nothing" with a lot of attitude again. I could see the look

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in his eyes. He looked at me in a way that said *you're going to pay for that*.

He said go to the room now. I said no, and I got the death stare again which made me quiver so I decided I'd better go to the room because I'd crossed the line. In the room I was already thinking of a way to apologise before he came in. But I ran out of time: the phone call was short so he didn't have time to cool down. So I lay down on the bed facing my back to the door. I heard the room door close and it was about 10 at night. He said, "Baby, get into bed." My pride took over and I said, "No." In a very calm powerful voice he said, "I'm going to the bathroom and when I get back you'd better be in bed, and then we're going to talk about what you did downstairs." I thought to myself what a nerve does this man have? We're having a disagreement and he wants sex! But I did as he'd told me.

When he got out of the bathroom he had that look on his face that said *you had better have done what I asked*. He turned off the lights and put the side lamp on dim. And that look that he gave me made me feel so submissive. He's big built and strong. He's not that much taller than me and but he is very strong. So when he got into bed he immediately got on top of me and put one arm around my waist, and with the other he pinned my hand to the bed. With my free hand I touched the side of his face.

He then said "I heard what you said downstairs—I suggest you apologise now." So I looked him in the eye in the dim light and I said

I'm sorry. And he said, "Say it again" and I said I'm sorry again. And then I tried to wriggle away. He made his grip firmer.

I immediately felt a sense of fear because he hasn't ever held me that hard before. But the fear felt so good that I immediately got so turned on and I said, "Darling you're hurting me." I felt helpless but I actually felt good being imprisoned by his weight and I could only escape if he let me. He kissed me deep and hard and that was so welcome. He kept on looking at me and then threatened to make me pregnant. I felt like he was just taking what he wanted and there was nothing I could do but just let him take it.

He then turned me to my side holding me very close to him while I had both my arms around his neck and he gave me a hard slap on my bum. I let out a sigh and he said, "You'd better start listening. He turned me on my back again and said, "I'm going to make you pregnant" in a firm voice. I whispered, "No, please," but I couldn't resist his masculine ways, and I didn't even fight back and he took me.

When I found out I was pregnant I felt like a whole woman knowing that my man did this to me because he wanted to. He was responsible for making my tummy grow.⁴⁴³

"WHY DOES IT WORK?" (21 JANUARY 2012)

This site is full of testimonials to how well Taken In Hand works. Not for everybody, of course, but for many more couples than my up-

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bringing and experience ever led me to suspect. The stories are usually emotionally convincing. But, then, I don't suppose many people would bother to register with the site just to report how their Taken In Hand relationship backfired. And the testimonials here span seven or eight years. I wonder how many of these relationships are still on, still Taken In Hand, and still satisfying to both parties. People may discover new tools, and new toys, but human nature remains the same protean, unreliable thing as ever.

But let us take the stories at face value. If it works, why does it work? Let's get rid of a couple of pseudo-explanations first.

One is that men are naturally authoritative and women naturally enjoy being under the control of their husband. That's not only a brainless stereotype, not only contrary to easily-observed fact, but a rhetorical fallacy. It's saying a complex phenomenon behaves as it does because of its "nature"--which boils down to saying it behaves as it does because of how you've labelled it. A man who is firm on many things but doesn't expect to get his way on everything, and who feels no mandate to order his wife about, much less to punish her, is not less masculine than a man who spans his wife. At least, since I am that type of man, I think not. My father was domineering with my mother, not out of principle but because he didn't know any other way. I knew as a boy that I did not want to copy him, and eventually I came to pity his narrow views and limited emotions. I wanted a woman who was my friend as

well as my lover and domestic partner. I got her.

A second wrong notion is that, historically, the Taken In Hand model of marriage once predominated but that the corruptions of modern feminism (and for some, modern secularism) have introduced confusion into people's minds and relationships. This is nonsense. The most ancient stories we have, from The Epic of Gilgamesh to the Old Testament to the Iliad, make clear that power struggles between men and women are perennial, regardless of laws, religious doctrines and social norms. And not just power struggles in the abstract. In earlier times male coercion was taken for granted. It still is, in many settings. A modern woman may voluntarily give her consent to her husband's authority over her. In most earlier societies such a gesture would have been laughable, because the man was assumed already to possess it. And in the societies of which I speak, which continue to exist today, women often had no choice of the man who would be in authority over them, as a contemporary Taken In Hand wife does. The interest of the Taken In Hand idea lies, not in some romanticization of an imaginary past, but precisely in its modernity, its radical affirmation of a couple's right and ability to structure their relationship in unconventional ways

I would like to explore some reasons that Taken In Hand appeals so strongly to some people (including me, although I'll never experience it). I can think of at least ten characteristics of these asymmetrical relationships, as they are usually de-

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scribed on this site, that would make them emerge as attractive alternatives to the bland, unfocused, commercialized fairy tale that is usually marketed as contemporary secular marriage. (I'll come back to that "secular" later on.)

Simplicity. Very possibly the single most appealing thing about Taken In Hand. The power struggle that virtually all couples know too well is, at least in theory, just waived. The parties, instead of worrying constantly about what their future negotiating leverage will be if they give in today, adopt a single overarching principle: he decides, and makes her comply. The only thing that makes it work is trust. One of the surprises, to me, about these relationships is the sense of release so often expressed by women: the stress of holding out is gone. *I no longer have to fear losing my autonomy; I've crossed that bridge. I no longer have to feel responsible for everything and, therefore, feel that we need to negotiate everything. I know what I need to focus on and what I can ignore. I trust him to make good choices, and that includes bringing me back if I stray.* Common sense tells me it can't be as simple as all that, but as I said, the stories are emotionally convincing.

Challenge. Taken In Hand implies definite behavioral standards and defined consequences for failing to live up them. (At least for the wife; I have yet to hear what consequences, other than divorce, might accrue to the husband if he defaults on important responsibilities.) Contemporary popular culture scarcely understands the notion of standards as they relate to everyday behavior.

Everything except outright crime, no matter how obnoxious, is tolerated. There is no actual punishment for anything unless the law expressly provides for punishment--and very, very often, not even then. Personal failure is defined out of existence. Yet young people perennially rediscover the satisfaction of being challenged to live up to some standard, with real consequences if they fail. Ask anybody who's ever played on a good sports team or served in a crack military unit if they'd willingly exchange those billets for lax, sloppy, ineffective ones. Nobody of any spirit would.

Focus: A Taken In Hand relationship is neither a natural phenomenon nor one culturally delivered to one's doorstep. The idea must be discovered, probed, thought about, and the relationship must be searched for, negotiated, dared, practiced, and learned by trial and error. These things are not true of the great majority of human relationships of any kind, which are based mostly on accidents of birth, social and economic needs, and/or transitory emotion. People drift together and drift apart, physically or emotionally, suffering disappointment and sadness but often not realizing that the culprit isn't the other person, or even oneself. It's the mutually shared habit of avoidance and drift. I'm no expert on women's feelings, but if waiting room magazines have it right, the average woman's most common complaint is that she feels she is more invested in the relationship than he is. Taken In Hand won't magically eliminate such a disparity, but it would naturally

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work against it. By definition, it requires concentration and effort.

Communication. This great mantra of relationship counselors can't be just a vague slogan in a Taken In Hand marriage. The concept is completely unworkable without regular, detailed communication about the parties' atypical and asymmetrical expectations.

Creativity. As I noted, general culture not only doesn't present any template for a Taken In Hand relationship, but if the notion comes up at all, it is usually for disparagement. The parties must first discover the idea, then discover each other (even if they are already a couple, one of them must usually convince the other), and then they must work out all the specifics for their own situation. All of this constitutes a major reorientation of thinking and adaptation of lifestyle. This takes intelligence and effort. Unimaginative, overly rigid, or lazy people simply won't be drawn to the Taken In Hand idea. If you're discussing such a relationship at all, you probably aren't dealing with a dud.

Specialness. This means the feeling of, not necessarily pride, but at least of satisfaction, at having chosen a distinctive and minority identity for some important aspect of one's life--the "we chosen few" sensation that all people crave. Usually a transitory and conformistic choice, like long hair in the Sixties or tattooing and piercing today, but sometimes constructive and durable. In any event, it is always emotionally reinforcing while it lasts.

Intimacy. Being intimate with another person, and not just physically,

always triggers strong emotion. The reverse can be true, too: sharing strong emotion with another person can create a feeling of intimacy. Survivors of a trauma or disaster, even if strangers, often feel temporarily bonded with one another. Even people who hate one another sometimes report the curious sensation that their enemy understands them better than anybody else (*cf.* Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?). Taken In Hand is a mechanism guaranteed to trigger strong emotions on a regular basis between two people. That has its dangers, of course, but if both parties have agreed to the setting for the express purpose of creating intimacy, it can work.

Intensity. Taken In Hand marriages embrace rather than evade the power, weakness, pain and fear inside us. Power and control are avowed. Pain and fear are given an open if limited role. (So, for that matter, is guilt, since modern men are conditioned strongly against being controlling of women, not to speak of striking them.) It is not a new observation that power, pain and fear can, for many people, feed into the erotic. In my own lovemaking, I could not *not* notice how much physical aggression entered into my pleasure and hers.

Meaning. Taken In Hand creates a broader context for a couple than the self-satisfaction, mutual pleasure, and/or romance that are the implicit offerings of marriage in popular culture. Only in movies and true romance novels does conjugal lovemaking reset the relationship, because in conventional relationships there usually aren't any definite ex-

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pectations most of the time. Lovemaking is just what married couples do for mutual pleasure (occasionally for kids). In a Taken In Hand relationship, it seems, not only lovemaking but a great many other things in daily life are specifically intended as reinforcements or resets of the original reason for coming together. The testimonials say this would be especially true of lovemaking after an incident in which the husband takes his wife in hand in some way. I don't know from personal experience and never will. But I don't have to have experienced it to grasp it.

And here I conclude by returning to my earlier references to "secular" marriage. I'm not a believer. I find it amusing to see some posters hunting up scriptural passages to justify doing what turns them on. But, in fact, what Taken In Hand provides for a relationship is psychologically quite similar to what a shared religious faith does. Like faith, Taken In Hand creates a hierarchy, sets out standards, sanctions consequences, employs rituals, requires people to confront the reality of power, pain, fear, temptation, transgression, and guilt, and establishes a context that confers specific meaning on the everyday. Given the appalling void that popular secular culture offers as guidance for a marriage, it is not surprising that people who never dreamed they would do such things are finding the idea attractive.⁴⁴⁴

"THE HEART OF AN ALPHA WOLF" (28 JANUARY 2012)

When thinking deeply about taken in hand and the relationship I have with my husband, I can't help but think about the wolf pack. The wolf pack is a family to the utmost. The pack lives for each other, to provide, to protect, to nurture, to reproduce, and to sing together.

Wolves have been my favorite animal since I was little. I have done research on wolves for years. One thing I have learned is that there is no wolf pack without its alpha male. The wolf pack is a family that survives and thrives on the fact that they have a strong leader, their alpha. The alpha male makes the decisions for the pack, he leads them where they should go, he hunts to feed his family, he makes sure the family never withers and picks a female for himself to care for and reproduce with. He breaks up fights between his pups, and makes sure no pack members act dangerously. He establishes his authority by standing tall and proud, making sure that the pack members respect him. Most of the pack will hunch lower to show their status before him. If a pack member does not submit to the alpha, he uses physical force to remind the pack member that he is alpha.

This alpha male wolf reminds me of the alpha male in a taken in hand relationship. He is loving, caring, protective, and a provider, yet authoritative and strong.

My husband had never made me relate him to an alpha wolf before until he stood tall, proud, and caring of me one night. We had been in a disagreement with each other, both in our bedroom at night. The argu-

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ment was intensifying and anger was rising. My husband suddenly got up out of bed and started to go downstairs. I thought he was walking away from me (he was really just getting a drink cause he was thirsty).

I had been with him when he was still a teenager, when he use to walk away from an argument that was getting out of hand. It always made me look down on him when he did that, and if I was to refer to him in wolf pack terms then...he would have been just a beta wolf.

Now as my anger rose because he went downstairs, I decided to get up and I was planning on going downstairs and staying on the couch that night for as long as I wanted to. Somehow my husband knew this, and before I made it down the stairs he ran to the bottom of them, took hold of the stair rails with his hands and stood in front of me. He completely blocked my way with his large, tall body. My first instinct was to be mad and try to push through him somehow, but my body was not going through with this instinct. I wasn't even looking up at him. I didn't want to look into his eyes. Then I realized, he wasn't walking away from our argument. He was standing tall, strong, and proudly in place. Realizing this, I looked up at him. His eyes were saying "you're not getting past me," and "please, come back to bed with me, I love you so much," at the same time.

The anger in me simmered down to nothing, and I actually smiled at him. He said, "Please let's talk," and he led me back to bed with his hand on my back.

My alpha male rose in my pack. It made me melt in his arms. And then we both were happy, and couldn't even remember what we were arguing over. To this day, I still can't remember.⁴⁴⁵

"TO BE A MAN IN A TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIP IS TO BE THE ENGINE IN A SHIP - IF YOU'RE NOT RUNNING THEN THE BOAT ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE" (14 FEBRUARY 2012)

To be taken in hand is to have a stronger relationship. My wife introduced the concept of a Taken In Hand relationship a while back now. It first glance I rather liked the idea of a Taken In Hand relationship and thought that it would be great. However I don't think that I actually knew what a real Taken In Hand relationship is.

My first thought was "Okay, I'll just tell my wife what to do and she will obey." However anyone who knows anything about a Taken In Hand relationship knows that's not the way things are. Sure, you are working towards this concept and idea, but it is everything in between that makes this relationship so special.

I am a rather lazy man by nature, so when my wife and I decided to try to do this in our marriage I didn't start out very well. There were no big problems with us or anything, it is just as time went by I didn't bother taking control, and it got harder and harder to do so the more time elapsed. Obviously this was a bad move on my part as it was

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originally my wife who was so into the idea of a Taken In Hand relationship. As time went on she began doing more and more things that I didn't approve of. Just little things that she knew might annoy me. I then realized that she really did want me to take charge and be in control.

Being the man I am I find it all but too easy to drift through day to day, and this is the real reason why we were not going anywhere. My taking the path of least resistance was making my wife feel frustrated. To be a man in a Taken In Hand relationship is not just to have ultimate authority or to be able to order your wife to do something. It requires you to *engage*—to put all you are into your relationship, to continuously have your wife's well being and happiness on your mind. When a decision comes your way you cannot just choose the easiest path, you have to contemplate which choice that would benefit you and your wife the most.

I know that not all Taken In Hand relationships use domestic discipline. But I just wanted to say how much this does for our relationship. My wife and I decided to start a daily spanking routine. This was just to remind us of who was the head of the household and remind her to think twice about her actions throughout the day to ensure should wouldn't do anything annoying. This routine worked great for me and my wife. Making it an expected part of our day was a way of ensuring that I would remain present and engaged in our marriage instead of effectively checking out. However

due to my lazy nature I eventually stopped this as well, and I was able to see how much of a negative effect stopping it had on our relationship. I wish I had not stopped because it made our daily lives proceed so smoothly, and I loved the loving look my wife would have on her face when it was done. Her face said I love you and I submit.

So all in all I realized how important it is for a man to actively be the man in his marriage. There is no getting lazy or slacking off when it comes to continuously building and strengthening a marriage. When you do that, your wife feels abandoned or as though you don't care about her and your marriage. For a good relationship you need to be fully present and engaging in the relationship. Women need active connection. The trick is to find ways to engage in the relationship that you both enjoy.

I've written this post for my wife for Valentine's Day just to show her that I will put up the extra effort to show her that I can be her loving compassionate man. And I will do what is best for the most important person in my life. I am not an expert on the whole Taken In Hand relationship thing, but I do love my wife very much, and with experience and help from this site I'm hoping to explore this much further and make my wife and me as happy as we can be.⁴⁴⁶

**"IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO STOP LIVING IN
CONFLICT WITH WHO YOU ARE" (17
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I was born into a strict, but affectionate family with my father as the head of the household. When I was 8, my parents split up and my mother eventually remarried another take-charge man, who also took control of things the way my father did.

So I suppose I had this dynamic already in me when it was time for me to find a mate for myself. The guys I dated admired my inner strength and my quiet straightforwardness, but shied away when I told them I wanted a man to be in control of himself and me as well as the relationship. They loved that I was a straight shooter and that I didn't play head-games, but it seemed that they didn't know what to do with me. I missed one very telling clue at this time: My girlfriends could not understand me. I wasn't independent enough, they said. I was single-handedly setting women back 200 years; what was WRONG with me?

But eventually, I found a man who was willing to take me in hand. It felt right to me and we married. The only problem was that even though it felt right, we thought it was wrong and we tried to live as a "new" couple for 8 years. For 8 very long years we lived and loved against our inclinations, with disastrous results.

I always had a tendency to become withdrawn and cold as opposed to angry, and he went in the opposite direction; he became angry and vengeful, even forced himself on me—not out of love, but out of fury, despair and fear of losing that love. It was as if trying to live like everyone else just twisted his Taken In

Hand inclinations and then magnified them to the point of violence.

Looking back, I think the only thing that saved us was that we understood that we were not being true to ourselves and each other, and so we were really in the same boat, and being in the same boat, it was up to us to patch the holes and bilge out the seawater, because both he and I knew that was not the kind of man he was.

We didn't have a clue as to how we should go about doing that. Until, that is, I met and became best friends with a woman who could only be classified as a feminazi-manhater. You'd think that that would have been a death-knell to our marriage, but it ended up having the opposite effect. I more or less ignored her advice about marriage, but when she started criticizing my man, I stopped ignoring her and started listening to her. Really listening.

It was at that time that I consciously realized that what we were doing was wrong for us. I went home one day, knelt at my man's feet, put my head in his lap and wrapped my arms around his waist and told him that I'd been wrong, that we had been wrong in living and loving each other against our natural inclinations. I begged him not only to take charge, but to do so with the confidence that he so obviously possesses. I told him that I wanted him to be in charge from this point on and that I forgave him for all his anger and the physical manifestations of it. I apologized for my occasional outbursts and constant remoteness and said that I was ready

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to put our marriage, as an entity, first. And if that meant him imposing his will, then would he please impose his will on me because that was what we both needed!

He stroked my head so tenderly as I stated all that, then after a while, he heaved a deep sigh and asked me if I was sure about this. I told him I was, if he was.

It didn't happen overnight, but it's the way we were both raised and it came so naturally back to us that we wondered why we had tried so hard for so long to be something other than what we are. After all the struggle and grief, we had to rebuild, but we rebuilt on an already strong foundation. The results: It's been over 9 years since then and—I know it's cliché, but I'm going to say it anyway—we have never been happier and more in love.

He hasn't raised a hand to me in anger in all that time—not once. It's as if following our hearts provides him with an outlet for a more productive expression of his masculinity, which—in my husband, at least—has always been more intense than most other men. For him in a relationship with me and my Taken In Hand inclinations, to repress that only resulted in fury and angst.⁴⁴⁷

“MY TESTING IS OF MYSELF NOT HIS CONTROL OF ME” (26 FEBRUARY 2012)

A testing wife is not always testing the husband's charge level or capabilities. I know my husband can handle me. It's my identity I'm testing, not his, my womanhood, not his masculinity. Yes, women have their

own gifts and are not inferior to men in the big picture, but being taken in hand by look or word or deed helps me to face that I am a woman. My husband informs me somehow: you are a woman, so you had better like it.

Womanhood is not as clearly defined or as welcome as people say. In a lot of ways, manhood looks more enjoyable, and I do get envious. I think of being that strong, fast, and invulnerable—my spirit but a man and best friends with my husband. I don't mean I want to be a muscular woman and get a short hair cut. I'm not even a tomboy.

But inside there's a part of me that wants to stay a girl or even become a man, a part of me that thinks my becoming a woman is unfair. My husband can quiet this part. He lets me know he's glad I'm that malleable and little and fluttering, and I understand. I feel blessed, fortunate to be a woman loved by him.

My husband warns me sometimes in this way: “We have a minute for you to think about what you want.” Usually, that's enough. But what I want can rocket to impossibilities unless he shows me earth.⁴⁴⁸

“ADVICE FOR WOMEN: HOW TO FIND AND MARRY MR RIGHT - STEP 1” (10 MARCH 2012)

Do you imagine your Mr Right being the kind of man who prefers to wear the trousers in the relationship, or do you imagine him being a man who would really rather you wear the trousers? Or perhaps what you want is a man who wants a strictly

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equal relationship. Or perhaps you think romantic relationships of any kind are irrational, and that you would never want to be married, let alone in an old-fashioned fully-committed sexually and socially exclusive permanent marriage.

Whatever you think you want, check very carefully that your feelings are in accord with your ideas. Spending your life fighting your feelings will hinder or perhaps even prevent you making progress in your chosen field, research, goals, ambitions, career or whatever you think is important.

Many women either disapprove of relationships entirely or they think they want a strictly equal partnership because that is the correct, acceptable thing to want. But deep beneath the surface, and much to their distress if they become consciously aware of it, their heart wants a hero, or a man who will love, protect and take care of them. They may well have a very low opinion of women who would want their man to be in charge; they may even be part of the faculty on a thoroughly feminist Women's Studies program—and yet if they ever allow themselves to feel the *feelings* underneath the rational intellectual arguments, they discover that what their heart wants is something unacceptable to them. They want to be in a relationship in which the man *wears the trousers*.

For some women, this inner desire is so unacceptable that they never marry and never quite feel fulfilled; others have a string of failed marriages and a lot of unhappiness. So the first step to finding your Mr

Right is to check carefully that what you think you want is in accord with your *feelings*. And your feelings may well be buried deep beneath your rational intellectual ideas about what you should want. So first allow yourself to feel without judgement. What do you respond to, sexually? What does your silly, irrational, inconvenient heart yearn for? Examine those feelings you feel ashamed of—the ones you are striving not to have. Consider the possibility that your theories about those feelings might be mistaken.

No matter how good your intellectual arguments against monogamy or for strict equality may be, if you are suppressing feelings, needs and what you respond to sexually because these things are at odds with your explicit ideas, the chance of achieving a happy marriage or indeed a happy, productive life more generally is small. Instead of burying your feelings, bravely face them, and accept them and enjoy them, and find a man who fits those feelings rather than going with what you think intellectually you *should* want.

If you are a woman who is intellectually appalled by the idea of a woman wanting her man to wear the trousers in the relationship, but there is a little part of you that is strangely attracted to that idea, you may be thinking that you can't be *that* kind of woman and simultaneously be the powerful, intellectual, successful and strong-minded woman of substance that you are or are striving to be.

Actually, you can easily be both those things, as you will see if you

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read this site. Wanting to be in a relationship with a man who wears the trousers does not mean you have to go soft, or be submissive, or become a Stepford wife, or stop pursuing your career, or your dreams or ambitions. In fact, if anything the opposite is true.

Once you stop fighting your feelings and find the right man, you will find that you feel more yourself, more autonomous, more creative, more intellectually engaged, more alive, and more able to pursue what you want to pursue, because now you will be at peace. And now you will have the love and support of a man who sees the deepest, most private part of your personality and *loves you for*—not *despite*—that core part of your being. The right man will also love your brilliant intellect, your strength, and your single-minded pursuit of your ideas, your goals and your ambitions. You do not have to diminish yourself or give up anything, just as you would not want the man you love to give up anything to be loved by you.

To find the right man, first listen to your feelings and what you respond to sexually, and worry about whether there is a meeting of minds intellectually later. If you are sexually and emotionally drawn to the idea of a man lovingly in charge, don't reject a take-charge man just because his intellectual ideas are not in accord with yours. And don't reject yourself either because you think there is a conflict between what your heart wants, and your career as a professor of women's studies, or a social worker, or a CEO, or a police

officer, or a rational philosopher or whatever.

What you think is a glaring conflict is no such thing. Being drawn to or excited by the idea of a relationship in which the man wears the trousers does not make you any less of a person than those not drawn to that idea. Nor does being in such a relationship make your intellectual ideas mistaken. Perhaps it is true that at some more rational time in history, none of us will feel drawn to the idea of anyone wearing the trousers in relationships. Perhaps it is true that we will no longer want sexually and socially exclusive monogamous marriages. It may very well be true that things will be very different in a more rational future.

The trouble is that the future is not here yet, and your feelings are what they are. And whilst feelings can and do change, it is extremely difficult if not impossible to change your feelings by an act of will. People strive for decades to change their feelings and sexual preferences, and fail. It is just not that easy. And spending half your life fighting yourself is stressful and it takes time and energy and creativity that you could better use for something more productive. So instead of fighting yourself, allow yourself to indulge those allegedly irrational, unacceptable feelings and needs with a man who is in accord with them, so that you will be better able to focus on whatever matters to you intellectually or in terms of your career or other goals.

If you want a happy marriage, it is vital that you take into account those

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pesky feelings and sexual responses, and find a man who fits with those. When it comes to relationships, the *personalities* and feelings and what draws each person sexually matter more than intellectual agreement. You can agree intellectually and have zero sexual chemistry or emotional draw; you can disagree intellectually and yet be strongly drawn to one another, feel fantastic about each other for a lifetime, and be more able to pursue your individual goals, including intellectual ones, together than if you were not together.⁴⁴⁹

"DO WOMEN REALLY WANT TO DEFEAT MEN?" (13 MARCH 2012)

We think we want to defeat men, because that's what we've been taught, yet we're miserable when we succeed. This is why we go for "alphas" and end up with jerks. THEY DISPLAY POWER. In jerks, that power is a false front; they don't dominate, they domineer. Because that's all they've got. We're looking for strong benevolent domination (a man who will sacrifice to preserve and protect what he possesses) and at first glance domination and domineering look similar. We see a power display and it blows our circuits. We tolerate any degradation for it, deluding ourselves and hoping that it might be the real deal. We'd rather die than admit that we need to be "owned," because that's not permitted by feminism, but we can't stop ourselves from trawling for domineering assholes and hoping to pick up a "real man" among them. Our

need for a dominant mate runs far deeper than cultural norms and social engineering.

Feminism, combined with the low-risk lifestyle afforded by surplus resources, has neutered men and taught them to be weak. In this environment women CAN "defeat" men, and we're taught that we are supposed to, so we do. We consciously devote ourselves to dominating men, yet on a visceral level we despise men who can be dominated. Since the option of acting like real women is socially unacceptable, we try to achieve satisfaction by being the best damn non-women we can be. It never occurs to most of us that we'd be happy if we turned our backs on society and lived as we were designed to. We just keep forging ahead in the wrong direction—the hamster on speed. Women are frequently domineering (we rarely have what it takes to dominate much of anything) but this is almost always a matter of shit testing. Again, we can't admit this, so we say we're just acting like strong modern women, but what would really satisfy us (unbeknownst to us) is a man who can override our attempts at dominance, and dominate US.

And what "real man" has the opportunity to display his masculinity in the modern world? There are no dragons to slay, and sensible men don't waste their energy posturing. Deeply "male" prowess has become recreational (except in the acquisition of money.) Hunting, fighting and competition are leisure activities, and we deride them as frivolous. The exception here is among military, cops and firefighters.

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Women absolutely drool over professional he-men because like assholes, those men act powerful. We fall for false (or real) displays of power EVERY TIME, because we need powerful men. PUAs know this and use it to their advantage, easily dazzling us. We're stupid that way. The fact that we chase posturing pricks is all the proof you need that we're lying through our teeth when we say we want "subservient" men. What we really want is strong men who have the courage to whip out their dicks and show us they've got what it takes to keep us safe. Honorable men who actually do have "what it takes" usually obey the rules though, so they hesitate and lose out. "Bad boys" never hesitate; they don't care about having what it takes because they have no desire to protect or preserve anything but themselves. They just want to get laid. They don't even have to be misogynistic; they want what they want and we're giving it away. No harm, no foul.

"Whipping it out" is the only time-tested way to win a woman's devotion. And yes, we are as capable of devotion as men are. That devotion will last a lifetime if the man is genuinely dominant, not just domineering. Social engineering cannot override biology.

We want the fairy tale; we were raised to believe we deserve it. We need strong men. We are unhappy with men we perceive as weak. We beat them down and discard them. If we wanted weak men, we'd keep them once we had them under our thumbs. Instead we dump them to chase "strong" men. We've been

demanding more power for decades, yet the more power we get the unhappier we become. And since we Grrrlz can't possibly be mistaken, we blame men.

When the feminists decided that "equality" wasn't enough, they needed ways to control men; one of their tools was to demand that men stop acting powerful. Men, long in the habit of accommodating female foolishness, acquiesced. Most men didn't see the long term harm in it, and "it's barbaric," or "it's no longer necessary because we're so civilized," sounded rational. Because of this, displays of genuine masculine power are rare. Since women are desperate for powerful, high status men, we'll take anything that remotely resembles male power, even when we know it's probably fake. We're drawn to it instinctively. This is why Game works consistently. Game is a display of power, whether that power is real or fake. It's a useful tool that good men dropped when they were ordered to, figuring they could rely on their "goodness" to attract women. Assholes didn't drop it, and for the most part, they're the only ones still using it. And they're getting the women.

Men have three choices: continue on as victims, go their own way until society implodes, or manipulate individual women, one on one, into embracing our natural role and rejecting our indoctrination. That last one is difficult and uncommon, but it's possible, for a man who wants a family. Men, women and children, like dogs, can usually be trained. Ask any happily married man who

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uses Game to keep his wife in line, er, happy.⁴⁵⁰

"CAN I STILL TAKE CHARGE IF I'M NOT A SUPERHERO?" (17 MARCH 2012)

While the concept of the impossibly firm, always calm, high-dominance man in charge in a Taken In Hand relationship certainly sounds appealing, I can think of multiple reasons why it just can't work, unless the man is some sort of super hero, and we all know they exist only in comic books and movies.

In reality we're left with what can only be described as the *real* man, a fallible being who can't possibly aspire to being a take-charge super hero.

Consider the following:

Real Men Have Needs

Cara Mia says she feels safe and cared for when lying in bed with my arms around her. The same doesn't hold true for me (nor should it) but I have to admit there are days, when life has kicked my balls firmly up about my neck, that I feel the need to be cuddled by Cara Mia. (Is this considered 'mommying'?) How could the husband in a Taken In Hand relationship possibly have this need? Isn't he a high-dominance take-charge super hero?

Real Men Aren't Always Confident

This is personally the biggest monkey on my back: a temporary, but debilitating lack of confidence. I have to think this happens to everyone from time to time. Sometimes it's just a matter of having a bad day

at work that leaves you beaten, battered and bruised and in need of a recharge. Or, perhaps a long day with too little sleep the night before. Or...do we still have biorhythms? Perhaps you're having a low biorhythm day.

How can the husband in a Taken In Hand relationship possibly lack confidence, even for a split second? Don't you need to be super-confident to be in charge in a marriage?

Real Men Need to Vent

While there are times when, say a co-worker, needs a good throttling, workplace ethics frown on this sort of thing and so you take your frustration home with you.

Last week I listened to Cara Mia vent for 45 minutes about what was bothering her, which mates are supposed to do for each other.

The very next day a situation at my job escalated and I seriously wanted to throttle two of my co-workers. As a real man, I needed a chance to vent my frustration, but I'm sure the impossibly firm, always calm, high-dominance man in charge in a Taken In Hand relationship would have just taken the situation in his stride. A super hero doesn't need to vent, right?

Real Men Apologize When They Are Wrong

OK, so this morning I was a bit of an ass. As a real man I will apologize to Cara Mia later today. But how could an alpha male super hero type apologize? Wouldn't that diminish his power and control? Or... could apologizing possibly make the hus-

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band in a Taken In Hand relationship somehow stronger?

Real Men Aren't Afraid to Show Weakness

No anecdotes for this one, I'm just throwing it against the wall to see if it sticks.

Real Men Are Sometimes Jealous

No anecdote for this one either, just fishing a little.

Hopefully it's obvious that I'm having a little fun here, but I would love to hear some feedback about how these issues fit in with being the take-charge husband in a Taken In Hand relationship.

With this in mind, I have a few questions:

1. Do any of these things diminish a man's perceived dominance level or otherwise make it difficult for him to be in charge in his marriage?
2. Do you have to deal with any of these issues?
3. If so, how do *you* cope with them?
4. What issues do you have to deal with that I haven't listed above?²⁴⁵¹

"DO I HAVE TO BE A CONTROL FREAK TO TAKE MY WIFE IN HAND?" (17 APRIL 2012)

I think I've finally figured out (or admitted to myself) what I *really* have doubts about when it comes to a Taken In Hand relationship. This probably should have been written before my post, but what are you gonna do?

Anyway, when I think about a Taken In Hand relationship with my wife objectively, I can see where this type of relationship could really be of benefit to our marriage. I can honestly say the whole family would benefit from stronger leadership from me. After thinking this through (and I don't know how many times I've done that in the last few months) I always come away feeling inspired and motivated because I *know* it is the *right* path for our family.

But then there are times when the bubble has burst (which might be most of the time) and I start having doubts, and the most common question or doubt that comes to mind is: *What's in it for me?*

Taking a firm hand with my wife sounds like a lot of work and, honestly, sometimes just keeping my own shit together is hard enough. Keeping my wife in hand too just sounds like a real drag.

Unless...I were a control freak! Which I am *not*! And I don't get the feeling that most of the men here are control freaks. Or am I wrong?

I mean, if I were a control freak, I imagine I would thrive on running other peoples' lives, but that has no appeal to me. In fact, I've been sitting here, married all these years, just waiting for something to happen and for cooperation and industry to "break out" and people to just start doing the things that need to be done. (Ha, ha, ha, ha....let's all pause for a long, cathartic fit of semi-hysterical laughter!)

There have certainly been many times over the years when I have stepped up and been the head of the

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household and made necessary decisions and "done my job" but, sadly, there have been far too many times—and this is probably something that has been increasing in the last 5 or 6 years—when I've been... weak. Argh! And believe me, people *do not* just step up and do what needs to be done! I think this is true in families, workplaces, churches and just about any other group that exists (except perhaps in the *Type A Personality Society* if it exists.)

OK, so I've gotten over the idea of an egalitarian lifestyle. I know without a doubt that it isn't even a possibility for my marriage. I have more self-discipline than the rest of my family (not that I'm perfect) and I know my wife needs me to lead, but herding the family like a neurotic German Shepherd (we have one, I wonder if he could be trained, hmmm....) just doesn't appeal to me. I am not a control freak!

So, do I have to be a control freak to take charge in my marriage?

And if I do actively take charge, what's in it for me, seeing as how I'm *not* a control freak? Is there some other sort of satisfaction that I will experience from all this friggin' work? (Perhaps having a happier, better balanced family life?)

Sometimes I look at all the damned responsibility that sits on my shoulders (real, imagined, existing and potential) and I get discouraged. Why should I take charge if I'm not a control freak?

Hmmmm, after taking charge of my wife and becoming a strong head of the household, perhaps the solution is to effectively delegate? Geez, just thinking about the

amount of control I will need to make that work is intimidating. It seems a daunting task.

Ok, enough rambling.

So, the bottom line is:

1. Do I have to be a control freak to take my wife in hand?
2. What's in it for me? It looks like a *huge* amount of work with no benefits! (Well, a better love life for sure, but I'm not sure that's enough in the long run.)⁴⁵²

"MILITARY DISCIPLINE OR THE SOFTER APPROACH OF A SOUTHERN GENTLEMAN?" (19 APRIL 2012)

My wife and I very recently discovered this site and also our desire to begin anew the relationship as Taken in Hand. I have always longed for this and on the discovery of this site my wife of 15 years admitted to me this is a deep desire for her as well.

We have read many of the pages with apt interest and our journey, though just beginning has raised several questions for me as a strong man who was raised as a "Southern Gentleman" but with a deep rooted background as a former United States Marine.

I do find conflict with the power I admit into the relationship. As the southern man I find it easy to take charge and lead my wife through the day but sometimes I have to reel in the former Marine Sergeant when he appears because he can be a bit scary for her.

Is allowing the Marine Sergeant I once was to enter more often a good thing for a new relationship so as to

establish my male dominance and intimidate her into hand, or should the southern gentleman step forward first and establish the cool control and allow the Marine Sergeant to rear his head only occasionally, when really needed? She may start fearing punishments such as push ups, mountain climbers and jumping jacks till she drops of exhaustion.

I do not like the idea of the intimidation factor of the former Marine but I also know the southern gentleman may seem a bit like Rhett Butler in *Gone with the Wind* and not seem strong or firm enough.

I realize that a Taken in Hand relationship isn't about discipline, pain and suffering for the woman. It's her need to be led and controlled by the man who has the final say in the relationship yet allowing her the freedom to grow and always putting her and the relationship first. Being too strict will raise resentment and feel unloving, and being too weak will cause her to test him to make sure he's the right man for the task. So I am faced with the decision of allowing the Sergeant to intimidate her or the gentleman to use a soft hand to lead her in the direction we want to go.

Which way to turn is the question for the day: should I attempt the Marine to start off and allow the gentleman to follow up after the proper amount of discipline is instilled? Any suggestions would be welcomed as well as criticism(s).⁴⁵³

"FIFTY SHADES OF GREY, BY E L JAMES: A BOOK REVIEW" (15 MAY 2012)

I had heard quite a lot about *Fifty Shades of Grey*, by E L James. A number of women on sites I belong to have apparently enjoyed it. And I had also heard it started life as fanfiction for the Twilight saga, which I found moderately entertaining. So I decided to give it a whirl.

It's about this college student called Anastasia, who goes to interview a drop dead gorgeous bachelor billionaire called Christian Grey, for her college newspaper. Mr Grey, who as well as being gorgeous and fabulously wealthy is apparently unattached at present (we all know how hard it is for gorgeous billionaires to get girlfriends), takes an inexplicable fancy to the demure Anastasia, and offers her the role of his part time 'submissive'. He wants to be able to do kinky things to her at the weekends; the rest of her time is her own.

Anastasia is shocked but intrigued, and eventually agrees to give it a go. She is given a contract to sign which goes on for pages and pages. I'm amazed she has the patience to read through it, because I certainly didn't. Anyway, she decides to take him up on his offer. A few weekends are spent doing some mildly kinky activities, then she decides to end the relationship, because as she explains to Christian, "You can't give me what I want, and I can't give you what you want."

And that is the story in nutshell. the characters never really come to life. The author makes a half-hearted

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attempt to give them some personality by making Anastasia interested in classic literature, and Christian a classical music fan, but you can't breathe life into cardboard characters by giving them unlikely interests. Let them fly a plane if they like (and at one point they do)—they remain obstinately one dimensional.

There are authors who can create improbably gorgeous hot men and make you believe in them, like Janet Evanovich in her Stephanie Plum series for example, or the late Georgette Heyer in her historical romances. But Christian Grey is not of their number. His allure is non-existent. A robot of a man, he simply goes through the motions. Not for a second did I believe in him as a real person.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the name Grey was chosen for the male character. Some of you will recall that Grey is the name of the genuinely intriguing hero of the film *Secretary*, a man who has a real personality. Christian Grey remains but a pale shadow (a lighter shade of grey perhaps)

The book is incredibly repetitive, and most of all on the subject of Christian Grey's grey eyes. His grey eyes are mentioned at least once a chapter, sometimes several times in the course of a chapter. Sometimes they are hard and speculative, sometimes intense and smoky, sometimes narrow, but always grey. Most of all though, they burn. In fact, his burning grey eyes are mentioned so often that you wonder if perhaps he should see a doctor, or at least get some eyedrops.

I am not sure what it is about this book that has managed to excite so many people, but it totally failed to excite me. There is nothing here to inflame the senses. Christian's burning eyes do not arouse so much as a flicker of warmth. Stephanie Myers's prose style in the *Twilight* saga has been much criticised, but she is Charlotte Bronte by comparison to the grey author of this grey book.⁴⁵⁴

"IS REVERSING ROLES PUTTING YOUR MARRIAGE AT RISK?" (5 JUNE 2012)

The Ox captivated me... underlined, capitalized and emphasized in bold italics. He captivated me when we met....classic tall, dark, handsome, charming singer, big broad chest, muscular, kind, so so smart, audience stopping singer, reads books like they're three meals a day....I was falling for him fast.

Right before He and I became involved, six months after recovering from my last breakup, open to a new relationship, I made a list of the qualities I wanted in THE ONE. Wonder if I still have it saved somewhere?! It was a relatively simple list that went something like this:

- The next man I fall in love with, my next boyfriend....
- is strong enough to change a tire
- is sensitive enough to cry at appropriate times, and feel no less a man
- is tall, dark, handsome, and intelligent.
- is a responsible, hard working guy, regardless of vocation. (White collar handsome and re-

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fined or Blue collar hot and laid back.)

- is stable, not erratic or impulsive.
- enjoys chess, Scrabble, pool, karaoke; loves nature and camping.
- loves food, enjoys cooking and dining, in or out
- is a drinker but not a drunk, and even a smoker, as I am and couldn't stand the look of disgust on my ex's face after I'd smoked. (smoker plus smoker negates the disgust, since they both smell, they neither smell!)
- is someone who loves to read, and we could read books together and talk about them. (The first book we read together was the classic *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*—absolutely marvelous book! And we literally lived where the story took place, walked the streets of the book.)
- is to be kind, affectionate and emotionally available. He would be outgoing and friendly, but not steal my spotlight, not overshadow my presence. He will add to it...
- We mutually stimulate each other and have lots of fun. Love and fun...

He had it all!!!

And WhALa!!!! There was my Ox! Not everyone believes in the energies of the universe, the energy of God, but I believe The Ox and I came together through something greater than ourselves (sign one). I told him that he had everything on my list...therefore I 'created him'. (joke!) He thought it was cute. :)

However, my list left off experience, so he came to me very inexperienced. (red flag one) I was not used to being the teacher in a sexual sense. All my former boyfriends had been up to eight years my sen-

ior, so I was the student. My last had really opened up my world in terms of my sexuality, brought me to the next phase—a place where I became comfortable in my skin, embraced the body. But still....I'd always preferred following in bed, or at let receiving some instruction or direction. When I was with X I was a girl; now I was a woman, and I was with a man, who was kind of a boy. (red flag two)

But, for all that he was worth, so much, I could look past the items I neglected to include on my list.

Waiting to sleep together was an "A" move....when we did, it was really a magical, bonding experience. Nonetheless, our experiences were beautiful, soulful and sensual. He had natural ability in that department, and responded well. I couldn't get enough of him, whether we were playing a game, seeing a movie, talking, cooking at home, watching cartoons (which I don't do, but did for him!), napping, going out and about with a group, or doing our karaoke—our favorite, I loved being with him as much I could get and could always be found on his lap—where he always pulled me (it made me melt every time), or with his arms wrapped around me. He made me happy. It was simple. Pure. We were inseparable. He was initially resistant to a relationship, but fell for me too.

A hop, skip, and a bump later, we discovered that we were going to have a baby....a true miracle baby I say because when people use condoms, babies are not usually part of the picture! (sign three)—no rubber barrier was stopping this soul from

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binding us, joining us, extending us...we were brought together more. I did not have a single doubt about keeping the baby; I was 26, had a professional degree and license, and I knew I could make it work, regardless of how Ox would respond.

When I told him he was going to be a father, and that he could be as involved as he wished, his eyes flooded with love in a way I have never seen in human eyes....he embraced it completely, and gazed at me as the mother of his child. It at once drew me in and propelled me away. This was IT. (Sign 4 and Red Flag 4)

I was petrified and excited, became cold, distant, ate in such excess that the pregnancy ended with a 77 pound heavier me. Yes, I said 77. I ate to control my emotions, like a maniac. I pulled away from Ox. He noticed, he asked, I asked for his patience; it was so much to process. I wondered if he was in love with me or in love with the mother of his child....but I was scared out of my sense. My worst fear realized....will I ever know? Is he in love with me or with the baby's mother? Ox was patient, present, understanding, but somewhat hurt.

I came around quickly and moved into his apartment, got rid of the roommates. He had "a plate, a fork, a spoon, a knife" (red flags 4 and 5). Luckily, a woman is in and so within a minute that bachelor pad mess transformed into a cozy home (my first power struggle win...)

A beautiful, perfect, profoundly aware, baby boy came into our lives nine months later. He was gorgeous....the deepest brown eyes

imaginable, brown hair, and a heart melting smile. He was a carbon copy of his handsome daddy.... everybody still says it! We had the sweetest, most intelligent, happy baby. Such a spiritual experience as a first pregnancy, the sonograms, the baby, singing to my belly, sharing thoughts and dreams, massages every day, talks of names. Our relationship was solid with hopes for the future. We were creating a family. He was so wonderful, giving giving giving... a foot massage every day, satisfying every craving without question, taking care of me. He sought to please me and have me comfortable, he was a sweetheart.

Ox worked and I got to stay home with my perfect baby that almost perfect first year. Life was good....I had always dreamed of staying home with my children, being a housewife.... It is what I wanted my entire life, more than a career, more than anything; a happy home in which I got to play the role of wife and mother. And I was blessed that year.

Ox made very, very little money, however, working as a carpenter's assistant. UNbelievably low. I couldn't understand how such a hard working, solidly reliable, skilled guy like him could accept such low standards, yet again (as I noticed with the first girl, red flag A) and the way he was taken advantage of by his roommates in the living situation prior to the family. I convinced him to go demand (ask) for more pay, and reluctantly he did, with success; be it small, it was more. This was my firstTaking Control....getting him to step up and

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have the confidence he should have, He was worth, is worth, SO much. Deserves decent pay for great work. Though I found myself fighting most of our battles (flag!) in the name of the family, making most logical decisions, and Ox would go along with whatever. We still enjoyed the life we created. We had a lovely wedding and then a week later found out we had a surprise daughter on the way.

We decided to move out of NYC and try out the south, a place we both found a better environment for a family. And off we went.

I was so happy and excited to travel, to move somewhere new, seizing the adventure, my first major move with my new husband. I was high in spirits and wanted to share that with my husband. But when I looked at him with zest in my eyes, he returned the look with a shrug, and maybe a grunt or a moan. He hates moving. Moved too much growing up. Army kid. That is the marked point in our journey, the first time i felt profound disconnection from him, still just a couple months after our wedding. Honeymoon phase over. That day it began, that moving day on my birthday, no card or cake, off we drive with my bubble of brightness punctured and slowly deflating. Into a very different future. Off we went.

Ox's salary barely supported us with one child. So I had to go back to my career. I made significantly more money and had health coverage for the whole family. It was the only thing we could do. And I have always resolutely said that my children would be raised by their par-

ents, not sitters. I was with many sitters while my mother pursued her path out of our home, her nursing degree, and did not like the feeling as a child. Ox would stay home with the baby, soon to be babies.

Even if we were to put them in day-care, it would've cost more than Ox's salary. When they are able to speak, nursery is good, but until then, home with Dad. I immediately got a job, which fulfilled me more than I expected it to, but I longed to be home with my son. And so it began...

It was an ache I carried; I ached to be with my baby. I wanted to be home....playing with my baby, reading and feeding, cooking lovely dinners for my family, keeping the adorable house up. But I swallowed, had to do it for the family, didn't whine much about it. I'd come home and Ox would generally be on the couch in a robe. TV. video Games. He created a barrier around the living room, effectually the largest playpen ever! And there was laundry....and there were dishes....and.....what, he asks, do I want for dinner?

I still insisted on doing some of the cooking. I guess I said I just like to cook for my family, but really I wanted to be the woman in the house. Our beautiful little girl comes to join our family a few months later....a sweet new soul. I got to spend a few months on maternity leave, thank god or I would've lost my sanity. So things were somewhat pleasant at times, but lonely. Money was pouring down the drain. Ox is an amazing, actively involved daddy to his kids,

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but aside from that, he was becoming distant....always playing a video game or on the computer.... When I noticed him, not noticing me, I reacted with far more distance than the distance I perceived from him. I felt lonely in my marriage. And he hadn't noticed my sadness, my loneliness WITH him. Maybe if I had reached out then....I wanted a man who noticed. What happened to us?

WE had no friends there, total Yankee outcasts in itty bitty North Carolina rural town of 207 where religion pervades the lives of all. We are not a part of organized religion, and so another reason for isolation. That's all people did there. Work and church functions. It got agonizingly isolating. Ox was always playing with Baby or laying around, wasn't fun. He hardly ever went outside. (flag) Was he depressed at his inability to provide? The disconnect had settled further into place.

I wanted him to go back to college and get a degree in these years he would spend home with the children. I wanted him to have whatever career he wanted, wanted him to love his job and get paid. I wanted him to get the kind of paycheck he deserves. He was enthusiastic at first, but then.....he didn't do it. I would support whatever choice he made, but he made no choice. I wanted to keep seeing the potential, wanted him to step up and take it, but he didn't. (This would come to be a reoccurring issue in our marriage.) So we went on; I worked and he cared for the babies.and my resentment festered.....

(Candice frequently used to say, "Doesn't it bother you that he isn't the provider? Doesn't it bother him? Doesn't he want to provide for his family? Well, I couldn't handle that in a man. I need a man who wants to take care of me and the kids." I told her that he doesn't express frustration on the matter, and while it wasn't ideal, I was making the best of it....the pregnancy wasn't planned, so we had to do what we had to do. She often brought it up....This line of questioning used to grate on me....I thought she was brainwashed by her mother's narrow-minded gender roles. Men can care for children too! I don't have to feel crappy about that!! Yet now..... Yes, Candice, it bothered me more than even I knew.)

The disconnection that developed down south traveled like a quiet cancer until it arrived in the land of little communication. Ox and I still enjoyed our babies together, but us.....what was us? Where was us? I didn't know. I knew I needed people, longed for adult connection, starved for my social life. I was not done with fun, either; not by a long shot! So back to NYC we ran as soon as spring reached its end.

Home sweet home. Summer with the babies and the friends, camping, softball games, barbecues.....a life again! We had a fantastic summer! It was better. We did well in groups of people because in those settings we were having fun at least. We looked like we were doing okay, to the outsiders anyway, and maybe partially to ourselves; we still had some hope. It had become common knowledge that the Lioness was in

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charge....some older men scoffed, some friends said it balanced us. But we only know when we are in it, the real deal.

The more engaged we (especially I) became with the outside world, the further apart we strayed from each other, the more quiet it became between us. Sex had become absent since the second pregnancy presented complications which required abstinence. We got used to it being that way and just never became connected enough to resume, not really. The passion was gone. Sex became mechanical and unwelcomed, on the rare occasions at all. This complacency set the tone for our next phase of the relationship.

I got another great job in my field and Ox stayed home with our two, plus another toddler for some extra income.

The house was a mess, he was always in that horrid robe, he consulted me about every little thing, down to what he should cook. You would think I would be grateful to have such a considerate husband, thinking of my wants, but it had the exact opposite effect on me. I disdained it. I was disgusted by it. He stopped making any decisions and I decided everything, as simple as which restaurant to go to and as serious as where to live. I controlled everything. Everything. My career, the finances, the home, the groceries, the shopping, the cooking, cleaning, the communications with family and friends, the career, the finances, the vehicle, the doctor appointments, the holidayshis initiative was so low it was practically non-existent.

I felt like his mother. It got so bad that whatever initiative he did take would go unnoticed, or worse, criticised by me. Following the advice of a friend to "give him one thing that he will control, like groceries." I tried but found myself meddling and micro-managing, and ultimately taking it over again within weeks. I was used to my way by this point. This was the unhealthy way of our world. We were in deep.

Great, great dad.....but that was it with us. Faded. I was in charge and resentful for being forced into this position I did not apply for. It was like I was living someone else's life. God knows what Ox was feeling, I was disgusted and hyper-critical; he was beaten down by me. Every little thing he did drove me crazy. He didn't pay attention to me or to anything (was probably intimidated!), the cabinets wide open, the sink looked like a terrible loss at Tetris, wrappers and dishes wherever last used, it was making me crazy. Tornado Ox, I'd say. I even begun referring to him as my third child—what an awful thing to say. My words were sharp and I always won.... except when it came to getting him to go to school.

He would indifferently consider options, casually deprecate himself as no good, unskilled, unable. I poured out my support, but he was probably too beaten down at this point to even feel it. I encouraged, I begged, I nagged, and nothing. I pleaded with him....I would support whatever choice he made, just PLEASE make one!! I'm forced to work and here is this brilliant man, who lacks the wherewithal to even

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choose a course of study?! To even fill out an application? Or two? (I find I can still get worked up about this when I go back to it.) I resented this injustice beyond words. I had a degree, but I always thought and intended my career to be on the back burner when I raised my children.

My dream of raising my kids, being the mother that I never had, was compromised and I was coming to terms with the reality that this dream would likely never be realized. I was raised by a man, and now I was the man, when all I ever wanted was to be the woman. It was killing me inside; it was an assault on my womanhood. This man was unable to provide at the time, but if he wanted to change that, he could. But he made no move. Stagnancy. Blinders. -- What we didn't know: there was something we both didn't know he could've done.... Taken In Hand!

Could that have cured the down-trodden esteem? Control?—the fact that he did nothing to seize the opportunity, did nothing to provide for the future through education, meant the family would forever be my financial responsibility. My respect for him dwindled, and with it, my hyper-critical view of him went into overdrive.

It became harder and harder to see any of all that bounty, that abundance of good he possesses, that drew me to him in the first place. I then saw lazy, I saw lacking ambition, I saw weak, sloppy, I saw immaturity, fear.... I saw a child. It only got worse from there.... I drilled him down, emasculated him. Anyone could see it. Being able to do

that sickened me; I felt repulsed with him for taking it, I felt repulsed with myself for dishing it. What kind of woman am I that I can crush my man?? I did not feel like a woman, and I did not see him as a man.

But other men did notice me; other men complimented me and startled the suffocating femininity within. Other men stood up to me, above me, and were unable to be beaten down by me. Yea, I'm feisty, but I don't want to be a man! I couldn't control the urge to feel it for a moment, to indulge, to have an affair to feel alive (I felt trapped and dead), but in retrospect, I believe I wanted to feel like a woman, wanted to see someone as a man. And while it was incredibly unfaithful, dishonest, wrong....it brought me back to life. I mustered up the drive to lose the remaining 30 pounds of the 80 gained in pregnancy. I wanted to resurrect the woman inside, I wanted to connect with a man, wanted to be wanted, I wanted to be swept away. But by way of guilt, by reason of what little moral code left, I discontinued it after a couple months. Remained shut down thereafter.

My spiritual path brought me to come clean a year and a half later, in an attempt to salvage any possibility remaining in the marriage. Ox forgave me and we moved on. But we were just going through the motions. At social functions we barely noticed each other, a far cry from the guy whose lap I lived on in the beginning. I flirted with people who gave me what I needed, he flirted with people who gave him what he needed. We never touched each other.

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er. And at home, Ox was alone much of the time and I was out all the time, like a single kid, to all hours. I didn't want to be there.... avoided it at all cost. Whenever he tried to confront me, I would bite his head off, tear him apart.

Yet...

I had a few fleeting images of stumbling in at 5 am and maybe THIS will be when he has had enough.... to be a man who would throw me over his knee, and lay down the law; be the man I saw when I met him....remind me of the woman I was. But such was the stuff of fantasy.

The reality, he used to say, was I like a drill pounding him into the ground. It was true and I couldn't control it and I hated it. I don't want to be a drill. But why with him? Why not with others.....neither of us had the right answer to that.

Fast fwd.....kids in school, Ox begins working. We function well as a family, but hang on by a thread as a couple. That same suffocating feeling of disconnection ever present. I steamroller him when we fight until it reaches an even more dangerous point at which I don't even bother because I know he can NEVER win. I am convinced he can't handle me. I have become the Shrew.

He was exasperated and I just felt trapped. I felt that we weren't compatible, just never had enough time as a couple to figure that out. We were a family most of the time, not a couple. It was lost. Same issues....I was a control freak and he was a doormat. I roared and he backed down. It was not a relationship....we were like roommates by the end, sib-

lings maybe. So sad. Tried breaking up a couple of times, but it was too emotional....we couldn't let go. Ox held tighter than I did because he was scared of being alone and lacked confidence in his ability to stand alone as a man, he had never done it before. But it was over long before we finally split. It had to end, and since I was in charge of everything, I took on that responsibility too.

He cried and pleaded and flew into a stream of self pity, invalidating himself in a way both heartbreaking and appalling, so sad and unattractive, and simply not true. He is a wonderful man. He wasn't happy with me, he couldn't have really wanted me, he was just scared of the unknown. I couldn't let it go on just because we were afraid of being alone; it lacked integrity. He would learn like everybody else does, by doing it. He moved out the next month.

I experienced an exhilarating freedom in releasing myself from this cage I had been living in, but the free feeling was short-lived and quickly followed and swallowed by the pits of hell. I dove into a relationship with a "friend" (who had been prepping me and overtly wanting me for months), and it allowed me to hide from any divorce feelings. Though naturally shaken by the breakup, pulled in the direction of another man, An alpha man. Even before the split I was sufficiently distracted to cope for a number of months. I say cope, but I was extremely unbalanced; my breakdowns and meltdowns were delayed, but vicious, muddled, unfocused, destructive.

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Over the course of the year, I was a hot mess....partying and missing work, hanging out with the wrong crowd until all hours of the night, spending recklessly and selfishly. My world was spinning. My "friend" turned out to be a complete asshole, and I ended that four months after it began, though it wouldn't truly end until several torturous months later. I found myself mourning two men at the same time, and sorting out who I felt what toward and why. I wanted so badly to be happy, and spent a whole year without Ox, trying to find that happiness, but instead I felt broken, hopeless.

While in the early stages of our time apart Ox was a sad wreck of a mess, he withdrew into his own world and worked through the feelings of depression, moved on, became independent, displayed assertiveness. Fairly quickly, he stabilized as an independent person. We shared custody of the children and interacted almost daily as a result. We deliberately had family time—dinners together, some activities, and some holidays. It was friendly but distant, at first. We were civil, focused on remaining able to function as a family, and eventually attended common social functions, even formed a friendship. I saw the change that taking care of himself did for him, and it was good, it was attractive. He confronted things, confronted me, and didn't back down like he used to. He was always there, was the most responsible father one could imagine. He grew up, manned up, handled things. He had become completely

independent, budgeted his money with such precision that he usually had quite more in his account than I did, even though I made significantly more money. He grew ...He stopped ignoring things, faced them, and began handling them, handling me. Over the year I saw these changes in him....

...I found myself, late, dealing with my feelings about the pending divorce. My husband was the nicest guy ever.... Why the hell didn't it work? Because I could push him around? It's that simple? When we switched roles, everything went really wrong. Maybe....if we hadn't HAD to switch roles, maybe it wouldn't have been like that.... maybe.... there could've been something else. If I had gotten to be in the woman's role, and he in the man's, what could've been?

A month before Ox and I broke up, I wrote for the first time in years....it focused on power.

I wrote about how when Ox and I were at functions together, we didn't speak, didn't touch, didn't even notice each other anymore. How different it was from the fiery beginning. I figured I fell in love with an idea of who he was, rather than who he was himself. Then I noted certain other women...when he spoke with them, he was animated and excited, and they were too. I saw the empowerment he received in other interactions and knew.... I can't give him that. Certain people can respond to him in a way that builds him, but it's not me. I don't know why, but I could not. And I so deeply wanted for him to have that, he deserved that. And likewise, I have

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such deep connections with a couple of others that got me charged up, built me up, validated and flattered me.

I want to be empowered. I want him to be empowered. Isn't that the idea of a relationship? Mutual stimulation, complementing the other, empowering the other and enhancing life? Regretfully, we just didn't have that.....we weren't even on the surface of it anymore. We should be with people that make us feel good about ourselves, not leave us less than ourselves. Tragic. I wished it could've been me, wished it could've been him. But he can't take me.....

Or can he?

.....ENTER "Taken in Hand"

....to be continued.....⁴⁵⁵

"WHY AVOID PURSUING A MAN?" (9 JUNE 2012)

I perceive men who can't or won't take charge as unhealthy. In trying to learn how to choose healthier men, I have discovered that if I chase a man, he changes, after initially making rotten moon cheese promises. I no longer feel I have to pursue that misery anymore.

When a woman pursues a man, some men will tell her anything to further their own agenda. It's just too easy for a man being chased to just go with the unbelievable luck of getting what he wants but not having to commit to it or do the work a real relationship requires. When a man pursues, it is much easier for a woman to determine if he is truthful about his intentions, whether he has

ulterior motives or whether he actually has the intentions he says he has.

Take-charge men are wired to hunt. If I pursue, I strip a man of that whole dynamic: I've essentially stripped him of his manhood. And I've actually *set myself up* to be used and dumped. I can determine a man's agenda much better if I leave it to him to do the pursuing or not as he wishes.

Standing still and waiting for a man to act, and letting go if he doesn't is something I've struggled with all my adult life. Even before I became an adult. I truly am a go-getter. But that take-charge trait that is so much a bonus in my professional world, will kill love in my personal life. I have learned, from hard experience, that for me to chase is to doom a potential relationship from the start. Even if a man might benefit from a little encouragement from me to pursue me or take charge, I refuse. I can't ever be sure he's only doing it because I encouraged him to do so. I can never be sure he acted of his own free will.

Part of the universal law of relationships is that there has to be free choice, not falling. Somehow, when a woman chases, falling happens. Somehow when a man chases, there is the necessary free choice. I want to be pursued, and I want my man to take charge on his own. I do not, in any way, want to have to be in control of his choices, ever.

This letting go of the chances of a relationship blooming because I "encouraged" allows me to not get so enmeshed in being alone now, waiting. I do not have to be so emo-

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tionally affected because I do not have a man in my life right now. Choice is the key. If every last man in the world is currently choosing not to pursue me, then I am currently choosing to live my life anyway, move on, and be open and ready for the one who will choose when he's ready. And I am confident the right man will come along, as I am focusing on sending out signals that I want only that kind of man. If a man doesn't "get" my signals, he is not for me. The man who notices is the man for me.⁴⁵⁶

"THE MARRIED MAN SEX LIFE PRIMER 2011, BY ATHOL KAY: A BOOK REVIEW" (13 JUNE 2012)

I'm not a huge fan of self-help books, but thought I would have a look at *The Married Man Sex Life Primer 2011*, by Athol Kay, as there has been some talk about it on the Taken In Hand site.

The purpose of the book is to teach men how to get their wives to have sex with them and have a better, more happy and stable marriage. His solution is fairly simple: he thinks men need to combine the qualities of what he calls 'alpha' and 'beta' men. He argues that women are hardwired by evolution to be attracted to 'alpha' men, but that the alpha qualities, undiluted by beta ones, are not necessarily what a modern woman wants or needs for a successful marriage.

You need both. To develop your 'alpha' qualities become more assertive, don't stand any nonsense, make yourself more attractive by working

out etc. But you also need to have the 'beta' qualities, of being a good husband and father, helping out around the house, playing with your children, etc. There needs to be a balance of both.

Basically, he says if you are more alpha you need to develop your beta qualities, and if you are more beta, you need to develop your alpha qualities. You will thus make yourself utterly desirable and irresistible, and have a happier, more sex-filled marriage. Athol Kay modestly describes himself as being more of a natural beta really, but having learnt to work up his alpha side.

Well, I cannot deny that I find my husband more attractive when he is assertive (as opposed to being in a rage and yelling his head off). I think some husbands—perhaps many—will have success if they try this. I don't know if all wives get very turned on when their husbands start bossing them about, but I do. And it helps if he is good with the kids as well.

I can see that the working out and keeping fit bit probably would make many men more attractive. Might make mine more attractive, but I'm afraid it isn't going to happen. He's not interested in working out. The plus side of that is that I don't have to work out either. There is always an upside. Athol Kay suggests that if a husband who is about as attractive as his wife starts working out and thereby increasing his attractiveness, if she is wise, his wife will throw herself into working out as well, to keep up with him, and vice versa. A marriage between individuals of

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very different levels of attractiveness is not a stable marriage, he says.

There is some stuff that personally would leave me cold—his insistence on the importance of dressing well for instance, and his suggestion that wearing silk underwear is likely to get your wife excited. I personally am not that bothered by what sort of clothes a man wears (within reason) and I don't really go in for scrutinising their underwear that closely, I am more accustomed to my husband scrutinising mine. Knickers are something he gets excited about, not me.

Then we come to spanking. Yes, I perked up when I got to that bit: underwear doesn't interest me much, but spanking does. Well, he suggests that light spanking helps to reinforce a husband's dominance, and is sexy, but he is at pains to stress that it must be with the hand only, no implements, and the man should stop as soon as his wife's bottom gets pink. Well, I'm sorry, but a spanking as mild as that would simply leave me frustrated and wanting more. A recipe for irritation in fact. And I suspect many Taken In Hand inclined women would feel the same. We're after something a bit more intense.

Probably the bit I found myself most disagreeing with though was his apparent insistence that it is good for the woman to be a bit nervous of losing her man. If he is fit and attractive enough, he says, other women will start ogling him, and that will keep his wife on her toes. That sort of insecurity would not make me try harder to make myself attractive to my husband as Athol

Kay seems to think it will, it would rather drive me in the opposite direction. I would think 'oh well, if he's going to go off with another woman, what's the point of trying to keep him? I'm never going to be as goodlooking as she is,' etc. I'm just not interested in competing for a man. Either he likes me best or he doesn't.

Then there is the list of qualities to look for in a wife. The list that appears in *The Married Man Sex Life Primer 2011* appears to have been adjusted somewhat from the one on the author's blog. For instance, although he says 'ideally a virgin' he does admit that not all women who marry are virgins, and he observes, broadmindedly, that a woman of thirty will probably have some kind of sexual history. Very magnanimous of him.

And then there is the breast cup size. On his blog, I am pretty sure he stated that a B cup was the thing to aim for, but in the book he has adjusted this to a more flexible B or C cup. So there is hope even for ladies who aren't a B cup. Cheering news.

Athol Kay is very happily married himself, and like most very happily married people telling you how you can be as happy as they are, he comes across as a bit smug sometimes, but he does really seem to want to help people. And probably this book will help a lot of people. But like all self-help books, for some it will probably fall flat. Read it, but don't take it all too seriously.⁴⁵⁷

"FASCINATING WOMANHOOD, BY HELEN ANDELIN: A BOOK REVIEW" (22 JUNE 2012)

Fascinating Womanhood by Helen Andelin is probably the best book I've ever read. It is in many ways a life-changing and marriage-changing book. The book is written by a woman for women but as a man I found it absolutely compelling and much of this article will be focused on my experience of it as a man.

Firstly I'll say that I don't agree with everything in the book. It was written several decades ago and attitudes towards homosexuality reflect that. It also has a Christian background, which will not appeal to everybody. But there are excerpts and principles that as a man hit me very deep within and I find are absolutely precious. I have that book next to my bed, but I seldom read it because I've found it will stop me from sleeping.

The first few chapters comment on issues such as accepting him for who he is, appreciating him and admiring him. As a man I cannot tell you how important this is. We as men want to be the most important thing in our women's lives. Ladies of the world take notice: we men need to be appreciated, valued, respected and most of all admired. We want to be your knights in shining armour, we want to be your heros. Somebody said that if it wasn't for women men would still be squatting in a cave eating raw meat because all we did to achieve civilization was to impress our girlfriends. We men

want our women to admire us and think the world of us and we would go to incredible lengths to accomplish that. You can imagine how damaging it is when despite our best efforts the woman in our lives fails to appreciate and admire us.

One of the chapters strikes on something even bigger than that: Make him number one. I believe that many of us are hardwired to want to be the most important thing on somebody else's life, that person being our partner. We want to take second to no one, not even our children. And there are good reasons for that, our children, as much as we love them will never be as close to us as we will or could be to our partners. We wouldn't tell our innermost secrets to our children, we will never want to live for the rest of our lives with our children, we will never have sex with other children. The intimacy and closeness that we hunger for in a relationship is greater than with anybody else in the world and being number one in our lives is the level of importance that we want to assign to that person and we want that person to assign to us.

The book also touches on the roles of women and men and does so with piercing accuracy: the man is the leader, the protector, the provider. Again, as a man, I cannot tell you how accurate this is. We men have it in our blood to want to take care of our families. We see it as our role, our responsibility to ensure our wives and kids have a plate of warm food on the table and a roof above their heads. Even if the woman was to earn more money than us, we will still see it as our responsibility to

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ensure those basics needs are met. To ensure the protection and wellbeing of our family is our prime role as a man, even if we have to give our lives in the process.

The role of the woman is different. There is a quote in the book: "Let him make the living and you make life worth living." The woman provides comfort, joy, soothing, encouragement, relief. As a man I can tell you that it'd be very easy to work extremely hard in the outside world to meet the needs of your family if you know that you are coming home to a woman who values you and admires you as a man, who doesn't take your efforts for granted and will make you feel like the king of the world. Page 174 writes: "When he comes home each day he is always greeted with a warm smile... she leads him into the bedroom where she can make him comfortable. She arranges his pillows, takes off his shoes and encourages him to relax... He works to protect and shelter her, and this is her way of protecting him." This is stuff that could make you cry.

The book also suggests childlike anger as a way to resolve conflict and express disagreement. In doing this it suggest that when a woman feels upset or offended she may cross her arms, pout and shake her curls much in the way little girls do when they are upset. This disarms the man and turns what could've been a nasty fight into a desire on him to accommodate her and make things better on her. I see very clearly why this might work in that a woman responding like this makes herself vulnerable and little towards

her man. She is no longer the fearsome dragon that the man has to do battle with but a gentle girl who has made herself vulnerable and in doing so triggers the most protective instincts from a man. All of a sudden the man feels compelled to wrap her arms around her and make things better for her, something that would've never happened if she had decided to pull up the drawbridge and lock horns with him.

The book also touches on what it calls Pandora's Box: when a marriage is in crisis a man may retreat and stay away from his wife, but when a woman starts practising the principles of Fascinating Womanhood a man may feel more loved and accepted for who he is and hence more secure to talk about the frustrations that have been accumulating over the years. This may sound like a step backwards on the road to a harmonious marriage but is not, since in order to make progress the frustration and pain of the past must be processed and dealt with. If the woman responds positively, that is fully listening and legitimatising his feelings and taking responsibility for her role in making him feel like that, those issues will be repaired and much progress will be made.

The book also touches on the feminine appearance, manner and nature and emphasises that it must be feminine and gracious if it is to appeal to a man. Again as a man I can tell you that this is absolutely true, we men are far more likely to be impressed by a woman who is feminine and girly and has all sorts of feminine mannerism, reactions, wor-

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ries and insecurities. It makes a woman look vulnerable and feminine and again that awakens our most primal manly instincts in wanting to comfort, protect, care for and be there for her. If on the other hand she can kill her own snakes, what does she need us for?

There is a really appealing underlying theme throughout the whole book in the taking responsibility for one's own actions, in this case the woman's. The book is aimed to women primarily and the role they can play in changing their marriage. Not once there is apportioning of blame towards what the husband could be doing, it's all aimed at what the woman has done to end up in the marriage as it is and what she can do to improve it. There is never a recrimination on him or an expectation that he should change in response to the efforts of the wife. It's all about the woman. And that is a wonderful work-ethic that is sure to trigger a likewise response in a man.

Throughout the books there are many letters of wives who put the principles into practice to great results. This is another jewel in the book, the letters are so touching and heart-felt. They exude so much emotion. They are a pleasure to read and very insightful on the impact these dynamics can have on a marriage.

All in all I completely recommend the book. Even if you already adhere to Taken in Hand principles I can almost guarantee that it will give you valuable insights on how men work and what is needed to get to his heart. It is certain to make your

marriage happier. I cannot recommend it enough.⁴⁵⁸

"LOOKING IN THE MIRROR" (26 JUNE 2012)

In the true spirit of taking a woman in hand, I realize that I am responsible for all that happens in our marriage. My authority to direct my wife's behavior flows from a realization that "our failings are inherently my fault." She's following my lead, after all. I need to know where we're going, and how to get there!

In turn, she honors my wishes and shows me a depth of affection and respect that is priceless. It's a good adage that authority and responsibility go hand in hand. I only accumulate authority as much as I'm willing to bear the consequences. In our case, we started out slowly, then picked up speed. I'm astonished at our growth, since setting our natural instincts free.

I'm seeing behavior—from two, boring, middle-aged adults—which I never expected. We're calmly realigning our marriage to better reflect Taken in Hand principles. With more than 20 years together, it's a natural change for us. We're clarifying our roles and expectations of each other—and we're having a lot of fun in the process. I mean a lot.

We haven't made any radical changes, nor have we discussed it exhaustively. I don't like to overanalyze, and she wouldn't be impressed with a lot of relationship theory. We both prefer actions over words. So, I've experimented where necessary, expanding what works, and dump-

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ing what doesn't. I keep a very close eye on her and judge the effect. It's a gradual shift for us, but the results are stunning.

In practical terms, my wife is a mirror of my attitude and behavior. If I'm happy, she feeds on that and responds, beautifully. If I'm playful or I surprise her somehow, she gets really wound up—in more ways than I can describe. I've been surprised at her reactions to some very small (at least, in my mind) changes. Now, when I press into new areas of her life, I'm on guard, looking for the results, whether good or bad.

She magnifies everything that I feel and express toward her—at least ten times over. For instance, whenever I make a small gesture that eases her burden, she gushes with appreciation. I try to choose wisely, since her views are based on perception. She honestly doesn't want me to work and sacrifice, in a lofty, altruistic fashion. She just wants her life to be a little easier. That's all it takes, and the payoff is huge.

Others have mentioned that a positive feedback loop develops. I agree. It can be a little intimidating, because it's so powerful. After seeing the results, I started doing things purely for the fun of gauging her response. I'll muscle into her daily life, take a sticky problem away from her—like some lingering family matter, and then I make a decision that settles it for good. At that point, she stares up at me with big eyes and an adoring grin. She's smitten! I love that look—and admittedly, I'm addicted to it. I'm a stone cold junkie. By the way, she comes up with

imaginative ways to thank me for being her everyday hero.

It's not a joke and it's not rocket science. It's day-to-day life. If you want to step up, take the reins, and make your marriage stronger, then study her. If she's your woman, she'll show you what you need to know. She'll also show you things that you never expected.⁴⁵⁹

"GETTING BEYOND THE SELF" (27 JUNE 2012)

On Thu, 10th February 2005 at 17:09 Jenny wrote:

I've noticed that some times when my man exerts his authority, I feel great, but other times—like when I told him I wanted to watch something on TV and he decided that we'd watch something he wanted us to watch instead—I feel bad. I don't think my man is a pig who's self-serving in general, but sometimes it can feel like it.*

Before the days of easy Internet access, my wife and I did away with television. Without television we actually had to talk to each other and work out our problems if we were going to live with each other.

Then, we let the box back in the house, as the children got older. At one point, they each had a television set.

Yet, we always seemed to gather around the *family* box in the evening to watch some silly sitcom of the

* "Are you controlling the wrong things?" 10 February 2005.

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younger generation's choice for perhaps an hour before they disappeared to do their homework with their televisions serving as background entertainment. (I still have not figured out how children can work better with the distraction, but they do it nevertheless.)

At other times, especially when they were younger, they would prefer me to read from some favorite book. Whether using the book or television programming as a springboard, we would sometimes try to relate the entertainment to life.

Continuing that tradition, I would add parenthetically that any battle over the remote these days is probably little more than a continuation of the old battles over sex and money within marriage.

All are a symptom of a deeper struggle within the marriage.

The secret to a successful marriage is to get beyond the self. That, in fact, is one of the ultimate struggles in life. We all come into this life very self-centered. Our wants, our wishes, our desires come first. Some people never get beyond it. The only god they ever know is named MeAndMyAndMine.

These days, with the children on their own, my wife likes to unwind while watching television. While not always daily, it is something she enjoys. When we got the dish, I tried to get a selection of channels that she might like.

If she is in the mood to watch the tube, the challenge for me is to try to pick the program that she might most like to see. Sometimes the choice is a no-brainer or I can pick an old safe warm and fuzzy fallback.

At times, she will tell me that I have made a wrong choice and we will search for something else.

Yet, as a personal challenge, finding the right channel keeps me in touch with what she is thinking. That I sometimes fail is not nearly so important as that I try.

Most of the time, it is not what is on that is so important to me so much as just being near the woman that I married almost four decades ago. Even after all these years I still like the feel of her hand, the warmth of her touch. Perhaps that is why she still says that, absent any entertainment, she just wants to be held.

In the end, the secret to watching television becomes the same as the secret to taking a woman in hand.* It merely involves asking what is good for her, what is good for the relationship, and then acting decisively on that knowledge.⁴⁶⁰

"HOW TO BE MORE CONSISTENT - A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR HUSBANDS IN TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIPS" (13 JULY 2012)

My wife loves decisive strength, and I'm happy to provide it. She is very capable, by any estimation, and has learned to offload serious problems onto me, trusting that I'll protect our future, our home, and our kids. She really seems to enjoy watching me, as I wrestle with sticky situations, and set them right. She definitely loves the results. I resolve things quickly, tying up any loose

* [Submitted by Noone on Fri, 11/02/2005 – 15:07 – The Editor]

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ends and sparing her from guilt and nagging insecurity.

We tried doing it differently for many years, equally sharing authority and responsibility. Guess what? We were miserable. It's no wonder, since we aren't wired that way. I focus on specific problems, stripping away the debris, and choosing the best solution. In contrast, she juggles a million thoughts at once, with each one impacting all of the rest. Our complementary strengths and weaknesses define our relationship, so understanding them is critical. With the benefit of hindsight, we'll never again swap roles or behave as though we're interchangeable. No, we've shifted toward a Taken in Hand marriage exactly because it makes us more effective—and so much happier.

I'm fascinated by her feminine subtlety—especially the mysteries that she keeps hidden. She's a challenge, on any given day. Her overlapping, fluid notions are all intertwined with powerful emotions. I might give up in frustration, except that on rare occasions, in just the right light, she reveals herself.

A few weeks ago, I caught a glimpse of her core, and it wasn't very flattering. I got lazy and let my responsibility slip, telling her to resolve a problem on her own. She responded to my failure in a startling manner; going rigid, as all color drained from her face. I noticed a sudden chill and guessed what was wrong. She confirmed my suspicion; I had let her down. She also confessed that it was a purely emotional reaction, but that wasn't the point. As my control waned, she became

very anxious; her protection was missing, and she felt abandoned and vulnerable. She doesn't need perfection, she just needs commitment and attention. I need to keep my hands on the reins, at all times. She'd feel it if I let go.

I fixed things by admitting my mistake, and reasserting control, insisting that it's always my job to keep us calm by absorbing stress. It was astonishing. She sighed and visibly relaxed. Relieved of that burden, she refocused her energy toward me, in the form of affection and complete dependence. My blunder turned into renewed intimacy and trust. It was a fantastic trade. I blew it, and felt lousy, but I learned a valuable lesson.

Of course, some choices are tougher than others, and may take more reflection. Usually, that's fine. Lacking an instant answer, I'll tell my wife to wait, while I think it through. She's fine with that. There's a big difference between hesitation and due consideration. A moment to weigh the cost is reasonable, and I've found ways to make it pay dividends.

When I'm smart, I take advantage of my gal's abilities without compromising my role as head of our household. It would be foolish to heap worries onto her pretty shoulders. There are better uses of her time. When I need her help, in finding a solution, I make it into something positive. Here are some easy examples:

1. If I need more time to think, I just tell her to wait. She can sit still and

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realize that I'm dealing with it. We both get positive reinforcement.

2. If I need more information, I ask what else she knows. She gets to help out in a significant way, but the final decision still rests with me. No worries.
3. If she doesn't volunteer any ideas, I can require her opinion without passing off the responsibility. Either way, I take her views into account, and she sees me doing my job, considering all of the options, because I care about us.
4. If I don't see the importance, I ask her what she wants. I don't trivialize her interests, but rather place them front and center. I want her to be happy.

As long as I acknowledge her value and keep a steady hand, she complies, without objection. We stay tightly connected, and everything works out in the end.

I try to be consistent, and avoid switching in and out of my leadership role. She would notice any discrepancy and become frustrated, so I pay attention, even to the little things. When we both feel secure and comfortable, our natural intimacy multiplies. She needs my strength and I need her affection. It's a powerful dynamic and we're thoroughly hooked — and very fortunate.⁴⁶¹

"CAN A MAN DEVELOP THE ABILITY TO TAKE CHARGE?" (31 AUGUST 2012)

When I met him, it seemed that my husband was not an alpha male. Or rather, his natural tendency was to be alpha to everyone except me, his wife. Fifteen years later, after coming to know everyone in his life — his

mom, his sisters, his first wife — I suspect that the reason he did not take charge with me had to do with the women in his life and his desire to make them happy. Many of the women in his family are not women who would bend easily, make many concessions or allow anyone except themselves to be in charge.

Regardless of nature vs nurture and all the arguments that can be made there, when I met my husband, he did not take the lead and neither of us knew then that I would ever want him to. Years later, when I began to explore the idea of a Taken In Hand relationship and approached him with the idea, he was more than willing to go there.

We are still working on our Taken In Hand relationship. We've had setbacks, but we've made great strides in the last two years as well. Neither of us is perfect, but he has started taking charge and we are happier than we were two years ago.

On this and other sites, we discuss how our culture has often, and in so many ways, taken away men's abilities to take and hold the reins. I believe changing that culture, even just in my own home, can effectively reverse that.

Can a man develop the ability to take charge? Absolutely! I'm watching it happen. Since he was the man of my dreams even before we decided to introduce control into our relationship, I trust him wholly and completely with all that I am and all I will be. He is worth that trust. He is using his mind, will and creativity to develop his take-charge alpha potential. He is doing that for himself, for me, and for us.⁴⁶²

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"THE 'SURRENDER DATE' IDEA" (4 SEPTEMBER 2012)

Had to laugh at a relationship advice article on AOL about how to spice up your marriage that recommended "surrender dates".

The wife allows the husband to control every aspect of an evening—what she wears, where they eat, what else they do after, and ... shock ... what happens romantically when they come home.

After describing the basic idea, the rest of the article enthuses about how sexy it is once the woman gets over her initial apprehension and discomfort at letting go of control. It goes on to say that after trying it once, many couples find they want to make these episodes a more regular part of their romantic relationship.

There is a similar article on the Oprah.com site that says:

Dr. Berman says a woman's need for control can be a factor in a diminishing sex life. "We're ordering him around and telling him what to do and controlling everything in the household, and then we wonder why we're no longer attracted to him," she says. "It's hard to be attracted to a man that you don't see as powerful and competent and equal to you. If you see him like a child, you're not going to be attracted to him."

[...]

Dr. Berman says surrender dates are a great way to get the sexual attraction back. "Even if it's just for one night or one afternoon, give the guy some control. Let him make some decisions," she says. "When he rises to

the occasion, you'll see how it really positively affects your perception of him, not to mention his own relationship satisfaction."^{*}

I'm all for any suggestions that teach people to explore their feelings and give themselves permission to do what feels good and right to them even if it flouts what's conventional and 'normal'.

This notion of a surrender date, now that it's got a pop culture name, might make it a bit easier to bring up the subject in conversation with friends. "Have you tried a surrender date?"

Henceforth, in public, if my hubby needs to take charge momentarily, I can just explain to our friends that we're on a surrender date. The women will giggle and the men will be envious...⁴⁶³

"WHAT MAKES A HUSBAND LOVE HIS WIFE?" (5 SEPTEMBER 2012)

Am I alone in feeling a bit inadequate when I read posts from and about perfect wives with supermodel looks, designer homes and superwoman careers—and they do everything for their husband too, and they are perfectly self-contained, independent and self-sufficient?

I mean, what do I have to offer my husband? With perfect specimens of womanhood like some of these Taken In Hand wives wafting about, how can I possibly be of any interest

^{*} See: <<https://web.archive.org/web-20130508075249/http://www.oprah.com/relationships/Secrets-of-Sex-Therapy-How-to-Improve-Your-Sex-Life/6>>

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to my husband? It's really extraordinary that he's still in love with me.

Zephyr asked if the husbands in Taken In Hand relationships are overburdened,* and what, if anything, the wife in a Taken In Hand relationship does. What's in it for the husband? I too worry about the burden on my husband and what's in it for him. And then there are the "manly needs" Zephyr alluded to.† I have no idea what he means by that. Am I too "oblivious to [my husband's] manly needs"?

I started asking my husband what I have that all his ex-girlfriends lacked. Why me? Did I just happen to meet him at the right time in his life, or am I special, I asked him.

My husband started telling me about his ex-girlfriends, one by one. That only made me more worried. The girls my husband dated before me were, in the main, very nice, attractive, well-educated, independent career women—women who had it together in a way that I can only marvel at. The more he told me about them, the more surprised I was that he loves *me*. Perhaps I just happened to meet my husband at the right time in his life. Perhaps I'm not in the least bit special!

Am I draining my husband's love bank and making too few deposits to keep us afloat, I wondered.

What *do* I do for him? Why does it feel to me as though his love for me is growing and growing despite the poor deal he has?

I do cook for my husband—it's the least I can do when he comes home after a hard day at work—but he said that he does not value that as a gift from me, because I have to cook for myself anyway. Same with laundry and housework. Hmmmm. Not that I'm very good at housework. Fortunately, my husband is blind to mess—he's adorably absentminded and messy himself. Recently he asked where the kitchen bin is. It's where it has always been! (Now I know why he never puts anything in it!)

"What *do* I do for you that you value?" I asked. "Why do you want to be with me, when you could have had your pick of countless beautiful, accomplished superwomen types who would do anything for you?"

"They aren't *you*!" he said.

"Yes, but what's special about *me*?"

"I like the way you move," he said. (Yes he really did say that!) "You are graceful, intelligent, beautiful, soft, and feminine—"

(I don't *think* so! Not the last three, anyway.)

"—I wasn't in the least bit soft and feminine when you met me, I was a termagent! So that doesn't explain your having fallen in love with me!"

"You were *not* a termagent! You had a few rough burrs that needed to be filed off, but you were never like [a radical feminist my husband knows, who rules her roost and hates him because he stood up to her nonsense and would not allow her

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20130128024750/http://www.takeninhand.com/comment/25610#comment-25610>>

† See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20130128024422/http://www.takeninhand.com/comment/25632#comment-25632>>

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to treat him badly]. You were always a girl."

"But I'm rubbish at housework, I'm not a supermodel or a superwoman, I'm well past my best-before date, you don't care about the cooking and laundry, I don't do ironing, I earn less than an illiterate 16-year-old school leaver, and I often forget to do things you ask me to do! I even forgot your birthday!"

"It's not about what you do or don't do for me! It's less tangible than that. Attraction and love—they're not based on what each partner does for the other, it's more intangible than that."

I took that to mean that he can't think of anything I do for him! Oh no! How could he want me? I couldn't see how I'd want me, never mind how he could want me!

"But why why why would you want *me* when you could have had any woman you wanted? If it's not what I do for you—and it obviously can't be that—what is it about me that makes you want to be with me?"

"That's easy," he said. "You're *interesting*. You're an intellectual. You're a good conversationalist. You make good arguments. *You make me think!*"

"But surely most of the women you went out with before me were just as intelligent as I am, if not considerably more?! And you could have *interesting* and *good arguments* with a male friend. What makes me a good *wife*? And besides, you hate it when I argue!"

"Intelligent, yes, intellectual and interesting, no; they didn't have

your mind," he replied, firmly. "Or your personality."

That would be my non-submissive personality with the rough edges that needed to be filed off? With my arguments that sometimes make him so cross with me that he banishes me from his sight? Should I take up reading books on how to save my marriage? Could I learn to be a better wife? One whom even Zephyr might consider acceptable?

"And none of them had your face," he added, smiling at me with total love in his eyes—as if that undeniable fact trumped everything else.

So I still don't really know what makes my husband so happy to have me as his wife, or why he is so in love with me, and believe me, there's nothing special about my face. Thank goodness for love blindness!⁴⁶⁴

"EROS IN MARRIAGE" (17 SEPTEMBER 2012)

It has been difficult for me to accept that something can be erotic and beneficial at the same time, and that an activity I enjoy more than my wife can be something both of us want, and is good for both of us. I'd like to say that I changed overnight once we started, but it's been a process and I frequently find myself hesitating to pronounce or do something plainly good for our marriage because I want to do it—literally because I want to I don't do it! That is not chivalry, it's madness, and it leads to strange circular reasoning if it's not checked.

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I try to keep in mind these keys:

1. Eros can be everywhere in our marriage. It doesn't have to only be in bed or on a fun date. Eros is much more powerful when it grows and recedes instead of constantly being extinguished and rekindled. And, eros thrives on long-term investments in the marriage that sometimes only seem erotic in hindsight. For example, we can get a high for days off of a home repair project, but I find home repair unpleasant.

2. Eros grows because of action and reaction. Even a stupid action is more attractive to my wife than passivity (to a degree, of course). That means that even if I did decide to selfishly spank my wife to get a kick out of it, at least I did something. I can always learn from the experience and correct myself later. There's a worst case scenario and it's not too bad (keep in mind this is within the context of a Taken in Hand marriage.)

3. If I am too excited about doing something to the point where I'm afraid to do it, it's probably a sign that I've let it go to fantasy land and I need to have some real contact with my wife. A constantly nourished Taken in Hand marriage keeps the fantasy alive through real, everyday actions. Husbands and wives gain personal experience unique to the marriage to understand what is truly enjoyable and beneficial to do. It's such a gift to literally live out a fantasy and have it be even more satisfying in real life to the point where the fantasy seems quite contrived.

4. It's okay to begin with the erotic and proceed to the more generally

beneficial. Similarly to how erotic desire in marriage is necessary and is an effective kindling of lasting love, the desire for certain elements of a Taken in Hand marriage is an effective kindling of real adoption of healthy roles in marriage. In many cases it is the only entrance into them. And again, it's okay to enjoy every part of marriage!

5. This one's a bit different. I've learned that our marriage really benefits from our spending time doing physical things, activities with our separate friends, family activities, etc. I wouldn't do well if I and my wife spent all of our time together. I really find that interacting with others and especially hugging/playing sports with others, and having tactile contact with nature, gives us an instinctive sense of how to balance our expression of Taken in Hand with other forms of touch and other activities. I have gotten a great deal out of TakenInHand.com, but at some point I can do more for my marriage by having a beer with a friend or wrestling with my children in the back yard.⁴⁶⁵

"CHIVALRY AND POWER IN CONTEMPORARY MARRIAGES" (23 SEPTEMBER 2012)

The code of chivalry associated with the medieval institution of knighthood emphasized bravery, courage, honor, valor, justice, military skill, generosity, a readiness to help the weak, and courtesy to women.

The term "chivalry" originates from the term for horseman in

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French, because the horseman (later the “knight”) had to be self-disciplined to take care of his horse, his fellow man, and his king. His caretaking was manifested by his willingness to go to war, but at least as much by his willingness to take care of all others who did not have the strength to take care of themselves. (Wiki mentions the widow, the child and the elder. Other sources add “the woman” to this list.) Many women need men for a certain type of care, but not because they’re helpless, but rather because they want to grow in certain ways through their relationship with men.

While we can argue about what the term “chivalry” originally meant and how it has been used in the past, in current popular usage it refers to courteous—and to some, old-fashioned—behavior of men towards women. Chivalrous men open doors for women, give a woman their coat if the woman is cold, and protect a woman from harm, for example, by blocking the path of a drunken man on the street bent on accosting the woman. The chivalrous man is a man of honor.

To some, chivalry implies that women are the weaker sex and in need of male protection. Women aren’t supposed to need men, and women who love chivalry and willingly and proudly agree that they need men are deemed to be beneath contempt. Feminists refer to women who need men as “damsels in distress” because they wrongly assume that women who desire strong men do so because they are intellectually weak and thus unable to think and act for themselves. Some feminist

critics of chivalry despise chivalrous men on the grounds that the chivalrous men (allegedly!) prefer weak women, or are trying to keep women weak and helpless through their chivalry. Chivalrous men are paternalistic oppressors, harming women by being courteous and kind to them and by protecting them. What man other than a weak man would prefer a weak woman or want to keep women weak, they ask.

But feminists have this wrong. Imagine saying to a noble knight of yore that he is weak because he is willing to die for his country or to protect the widow. When you cannot immediately change your irrational instinct to avoid personal harm at all costs (and so your instinct is to act selfishly), a willingness to nonetheless sacrifice oneself in defense of moral probity is no weakness, it is the highest virtue. It comes from determination, strength, and will. Chivalry brings the kind of tenacity that leads soldiers to fight in noble wars and less glamorously but no less importantly husbands to do whatever it takes to ensure that their wife is cared for and that their marital relationship is nurtured, regardless of the vicissitudes of his or her immediate feelings.

Many women love a modern knight who embodies this steadfast tenacity to defend what is good, for example, in the marriage relationship even when things are tough. *Taken In Hand* is a modern day celebration of the man who puts his wife and their relationship first and dares to set things right in his family when there is a problem.

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That's why life in a Taken In Hand relationship is precisely *not* difficult and indeed is downright enjoyable and fun. If you are willing to put in the effort required to make your marriage a Taken In Hand one, you too will find that your marriage will become more fun, more passionate, and a source of more joy. A tuned car is a joy to drive.

According to some authorities, men tend to feel more love for their wife the more they do for their wife. Some in the manosphere warn against chivalry precisely because of this. Being in love with a woman gives her power over you, they say. Be desireless, and you have more power. Feel indifferent, and you have more power. Don't do things for a woman, because it will make you love her more, and if you love her more, you will be in a weaker position. Bring her down so that you are relatively stronger. Diminish her power to give yourself relatively more power.

There is some truth in such contentions. Weaker men might indeed feel the need to protect themselves by taking action to diminish their love and reduce the power their woman has over them, but at what cost? Those who know the intense pleasure and contentment of passionate love for the good woman who is their wife would laugh at the absurdity of the idea that they would be better off if they were not in love with their wife.

It may be easy for me to say, as a strong man who is both passionately in love with my wife and firmly in charge of my wife, but I think that weak men would be better advised

to make a concerted effort to work towards becoming stronger themselves rather than taking the negative, dishonorable path of diminishing the good things that give their woman a little power. The power you give her through your chivalrous actions, by being in love with her and through your fidelity, can be balanced and easily exceeded by being her lord and master, taking and keeping her firmly in hand. A strong man does not need to diminish his wife or his love for his wife. A strong man can be chivalrous, passionately in love and faithful to his wife and still have enormous power over his wife.

Devote effort to making yourself stronger if necessary. If you choose instead to avoid chivalry, fidelity and passionate love, you will actually be weakening yourself as a man and diminishing your pleasure, passion and enjoyment in your marriage, and sooner or later you will become dissatisfied in that barren wasteland.

If you are as yet unmarried, again, my advice is to make yourself the strongest, most morally, honorably powerful man you can be, so that you will never have to diminish or mistreat women to give yourself the toxic, empty, and ultimately unsatisfying power of pseudo-strength. When you have the steadfast strength to love a woman passionately and faithfully and to master her firmly and decisively, only then seek the woman who will be your Taken In Hand wife.

The physical manifestations of taking a woman in hand are overtly sexual but for moral purposes. In the

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context of a marital commitment of husband and wife, neither can refuse the other for long the transcendent moments of sexual intimacy that anneals the bond between them, because each must be open to the other. And yes the man will enforce this intimacy with no more swagger than he exhibits when tuning his car. It just makes the marriage run smoothly.

The confidence that both have in each other—because of the noble steadfastness of the modern knight—allows his wife to relax and the man to drive.

Men who take their women in hand are very well aware that their women can be physically strong and even more frequently intellectually vigorous. They wouldn't have it any other way. Like the country he is also willing to protect, she's the best. A woman of valor worthy of her knight.

The concept of chivalry includes the concept of courtly love, involving a marriage of spiritual discipline and erotic desire in the knight who possessed it. According to Wiki's citation of Francis Newman, it is a love that was "illicit and morally elevating, passionate and disciplined, humiliating and exalting, human and transcendent." That is a good description of the love in a Taken in Hand marriage. Indeed, Taken In Hand has improved on the old idea of courtly love, by bringing the eroticism firmly *into* the marriage, annealing the marital relationship with the white hot fire of erotic passion.⁴⁶⁶

"HIM BEING STRICT MAKES HARMLESS NAUGHTINESS NICE" (7 OCTOBER 2012)

The Taken In Hand theory is that women test men to assure themselves of the man's ability and desire to protect and care for her while remaining firmly in charge. I'm sure that happens, and I don't want to protest too much.

But it doesn't explain why I'm "bad" even while feeling sure, more than sure, downright satisfied with my man. I find a more pleasant explanation in the hypothalamus, the bit of brain responsible for sexual desire, heat, hunger, aggression and fear. Because of this connectivity in the hypothalamus, people often get sexually excited by transgressive behaviors. Fortunately my husband's strict, so I don't have to do much to think I'm being naughty, and I also have a strong seemingly sexual desire to be good and approved by him.

A lot of people here like to think Taken In Hand is a little naughty. I can understand that, but mostly I like to think of my husband as irreproachable, not at all naughty, when he takes me in hand. He says he likes to think of himself as right as well.⁴⁶⁷

"TO THOSE WHO THINK HE MAY NEVER COME AROUND" (17 OCTOBER 2012)

About 6 months ago I made a proposition to my husband. Although our marriage was great and our sex life was too there just seemed to be something missing.

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Like it was the same thing all the time. I was looking for ways to spice things up a bit when I stumbled across this website. The idea of my husband being in control totally turned me on and the thought of him being completely in charge in our relationship even more so.

So after days and days of stressing over how to approach the subject I finally did. I told him I was tired of always trying to control everything and the stress that it brought with it and I wanted him to be in charge. He was thrilled of course. He felt like a real man. But as time passed I grew more and more agitated because it wasn't happening the way I had thought. He was taking control of everything but me and my needs. The money, the household decisions, etc... That isn't what I was imagining.

After a while and a few arguments I said it wasn't working and told him I basically wanted the 50/50 relationship back again. With one exception: he could still be in control in the bedroom. Well that didn't work either. It didn't turn me on. I was emotionally "flat" in the bedroom.

He was loving it because he had sex whenever and however he wanted. And he assumed I was content as well. But he was missing the big picture. The real turn on for me was what I had always wanted my man to be: the big, strong, hero-like protector who put my well-being, health, and safety first.

So I decided to approach him with it again and just bite the bullet and be straight with him (hoping I didn't make a fool of myself) so one night

the opportunity presented itself. It was late in the evening and he was going to the store to get something. I told him he better not take forever or I was locking the door. He grinned and said I was being a little bossy and I'd better stop or "else". Or else what, I threw back at him, with quite a bit of attitude. That's when he smacked my backside a couple of times and said "I'll have to give you an attitude adjustment". Bingo! He finally got it. I was sooo turned on.

Later that night in bed I told him that that little "conversation" we had had totally turned me on and I wanted to revisited the whole him taking charge thing with the understanding that I needed his control too. And I needed him to feel like he could use whatever means he felt necessary to make our relationship tranquil and totally trusting in one another.

I knew he understood when he kissed me and said "I totally want to take on this responsibility but don't get mad at me if I feel like you need to be put in your place. Know that I'm doing it out of love, and trust that I know what will make our relationship strong." Yay!!! He got it.⁴⁶⁸

"IT FEELS LIKE RESPECT" (30 OCTOBER 2012)

My husband and I are rather new at living a Taken in Hand relationship. While most Taken In Hand couples don't use physical punishment in their relationship, we do. One of his concerns from the beginning has been, "It doesn't seem fair."

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It doesn't seem fair to him that I should be subject to punishment when he is not. It doesn't seem fair that he should be in charge when I am equally intelligent and capable. He does admit that he enjoys the changes we've made, that it's revitalized our relationship, and that it's like having a second honeymoon sixteen years after the first one... but it still bothers him that it is basically unfair.

We were talking about this one evening after I received a punishment. "It just doesn't seem fair..." he said while rubbing my hair softly and comforting me.

"I didn't ask for fair," I replied seriously. "I don't want fair. I want this."

I could see the light bulb go on in his brain. He thought about it for a moment and asked, "What exactly is 'this?'"

I thought, but I couldn't come up with a way to express everything that our new way of relating means to me. I am giving up fair in favor of what, exactly? How can I express it? It means a lot of things to me: comfort, security, feeling protected and desirable, arousal, direction, guidance, covering, accountability... I couldn't find a simple way to put it into words.

After a while, I finally told him that I couldn't give him a full answer, but I could give him a partial answer. Our new relationship doesn't feel fair, but it does feel like respect.

When he turns me over his lap, I feel respected. That may seem odd, but it's true. I asked to be taken in hand. When he does it, I know he is

respecting the fact that this is what I want. He is respecting that I am adult enough to choose, and what I have chosen is to be under his discipline and direction.

I also feel like he respects my intelligence and maturity. When he holds me to a standard and punishes me for not making it, I feel respected. I know that he thinks I can do better, and that instead of making excuses for me or lowering his standards and expectations of me, he's showing enough respect for me to demand my best. I like that.

Finally, when he punishes me hard enough to hurt, I feel that he respects my strength. I'm not a little baby who can only take a spat on the hand or a swat to the diaper. When he disciplines me hard enough to challenge my self-control and ability to accept the correction, I feel like he respects me. He's not treating this like a game. He's not just playing around. He's showing me enough respect to make it a serious consequence.

It's so strange. For many, many years, my husband trusted me to make most of the decisions about the children, the finances, and the household. But instead of feeling trusted and respected, I felt lost, neglected, overwhelmed, and ignored.

My job in the household has not changed significantly, but my feelings about it have. I am more interested in my work, more eager to please, and most importantly, I feel the love and respect I have always craved from my husband.⁴⁶⁹

**"I WANT US TO HAVE A TAKEN IN HAND
RELATIONSHIP. HOW CAN I PERSUADE MY
WIFE?" (11 NOVEMBER 2012)**

I want us to have a Taken In Hand relationship. How can I persuade my wife?

This question suggests that you may be under a misapprehension about the nature of the Taken In Hand relationship. It suggests that you want to seek permission to take charge, or that you want to get your wife to commit to changing in some way. Doing either of those things would be a mistake, and not make your relationship more Taken In Hand.

Don't ask permission

In a Taken In Hand relationship, you *take charge*. You take charge in a way that is consistent with *putting your wife and the relationship first*.

If you were intending to take charge in a purely self-serving way, it might make sense to seek your wife's permission, but in a Taken In Hand relationship you will be *putting your wife and your relationship first* as you take charge, so there is no need to ask her permission.

If there is something specific you think she will find unpleasant, do consider very carefully whether the change you intend to make in that respect is indeed putting her and your relationship first, because it shouldn't be unpleasant for your wife, it should be fun, fascinating and erotic.

Don't ask permission. That would put you in the very weak position of being like a young boy asking his

mother's permission. Given that you have Taken In Hand inclinations and your wife was attracted to you, she may well have Taken In Hand inclinations herself too. If she does, being asked permission will cause her to feel revolted: she doesn't want to feel like your mother, any more than you want to feel like her son. That is the opposite of erotic. So don't turn her off and put her off by asking her permission.

Being in charge does not mean never consulting her, but there is a huge difference between consulting her and *asking her permission*. The way the husband in a Taken In Hand relationship consults his wife is more like the way a company director might consult a low-level employee – kindly, respectfully, but not in any way deferentially or suggesting that the decision is the employee's to make. He is not asking permission, he is merely consulting her.

Do not try to get your wife to agree to a Taken In Hand relationship

If you have the desire to try to persuade your wife to agree to a Taken In Hand relationship, could it be that what you have in mind is going to be unpleasant for your wife? If you were going to be taking charge in a way that was self-serving rather than putting your wife and your relationship first, you having a desire to get your wife to agree to your proposed changes would make more sense, but that would not be a Taken In Hand relationship.

Consent

Perhaps you think that seeking your wife's permission or getting her

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to 'agree' is necessary to avoid making this change non-consensually. If so, you have a slight misconception about the nature of consent. Consent is *absolutely vital* in a Taken In Hand relationship, so vital, in fact, that your wife needs to be *genuinely, wholeheartedly consenting on an ongoing basis*. Getting her to agree to a Taken In Hand relationship by asking her permission on one occasion is not good enough. It also rather assumes that your wife won't enjoy the change, and that you will be holding her to her 'agreement' later whether she likes it or not. That is entirely the wrong approach. Moreover that has very little to do with psychologically genuine consent.

Psychologically genuine consent is not about having signed on the dotted line and being held to that 'agreement' like a legal contract binds the parties. A person can make a proper legal contract and be properly legally bound by it and yet later wish he had not made the contract and wish that he were not bound by it. In such a case there may well have been proper consent for legal purposes, but later, when the person is wishing he had not made that contract, he is not wholeheartedly consenting *psychologically*. He may not want to break the contract, because he does not think that would be the right thing to do, but yet, if he could wave a magic wand and never have signed the contract in the first place, he would choose to do that.

The consent required for a Taken In Hand relationship is not like proper legal consent, which does not necessarily involve genuine, whole-

hearted consent psychologically. It requires the higher standard of consent of psychologically genuine, wholehearted consent.

When spouses try to get explicit 'consent', that is often nothing to do with psychologically-genuine consent. It is often more about pinning the other spouse (in this case wife) down to a particular change so that you can then later on point out that she 'consented' so now she needs to shut up and go along with it, as though legal-style consent were enough. But we are trying to create a vibrantly happy marriage here, not trying to extract grudging legal compliance, so we need to do much much better than seek 'consent' and then hold her to it later.

But how can your taking charge be consensual if you don't talk to your wife about it explicitly?

You are married. You know your wife very well indeed. Unless you are completely insensitive (in which case Taken In Hand is not for you) you will be able to see when your wife is not delighted with a given change, and you can make adjustments accordingly.

Ask yourself whether your wife would wave a magic wand to remove your changes if she could. Her state of mind should not be like that of a battered wife who refuses to leave her husband because she still loves him despite everything. That is not genuine consent. Many individuals stay in terrible situations, but that is no evidence of genuine consent.

An easy way to tell the difference is this: the battered woman would

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choose to wave a magic wand that would magically cause her husband not to batter her any more. That is clear evidence that she is not genuinely consenting to the battering. Your wife should be in a very different state of mind, such that she would absolutely not want to wave a magic wand to cause you to stop being in charge.

So how do you ensure consent without having a big discussion about it? You take charge while putting your wife and your relationship first, and you look out for unintended consequences including any lack of genuine consent on your wife's part, and tweak your changes so that your wife *is* then genuinely consenting.

Your relationship is a system

Think of your relationship as a system. One change anywhere in that system changes the entire system. Changing your relationship does not take two, it takes just one: you. When you take charge (putting her and your relationship first), that change will change your wife's responses to you, and before long you will have significantly changed your relationship.

This process is an evolutionary one, an iterative one: you make a small change; that difference in how you interact with your wife changes her responses and behaviour; that gives you more knowledge, that you use to decide how to proceed further (example: you notice that a change you have made has had an unexpected negative effect, or a different effect from the one you thought it would have, and this tells you that

you need to make a slightly different change, or an additional change); you make another small change accordingly; that has an effect on your wife; again; now you have more knowledge and can use that to make a further iterative change.

Instead of asking her permission to take charge, or trying to get her to agree to a change, simply make changes yourself: start taking charge.

Do not try to get your wife to commit to change

Being in the position of asking your wife to commit to changing for you puts you in a weak position, and is thus counterproductive if you want to wear the trousers in your relationship. A husband who is in charge changes the relationship as he sees fit (putting his wife and the relationship first) without begging his wife to change. He uses his own power to change the relationship, which changes his wife too.

If you are thinking in terms of getting your wife to commit to changing, how is that going to feel good to her? How will putting that burden on her make her want your requested changes? Will that seem fun, exciting and interesting to her, or will it seem like one big burden you are trying to dump on her?

If you have the urge to get your wife to commit to making a change, it is probably not a Taken In Hand relationship you want. For example, if you want her to commit to being submissive—to serving and obeying you—you want a D/s relationship, not a Taken In Hand one. If your wife is not a D/s inclined person,

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that is going to be a very tough sell, because of the unpleasant burden it puts on her.

Taken In Hand is a much easier sell because you taking charge does not require your wife to commit to anything. To move your relationship in a Taken In Hand direction, all you need to do is to start taking charge. And when you start thereby changing your relationship, your wife will change too, without you having to get her to agree to anything.

Help her see what's in it for her

Whatever kind of relationship you want, to sell your idea to her you need to *help her see what's in it for her*. Keep that in mind at all times, and you will be more likely to succeed.*

[If you are a wife wanting to persuade your husband, it would be a bad mistake to show him this article, as the purpose of this article is to help *husbands wanting to persuade their wives*, not the other way around. For more appropriate advice for your own situation, see this

article,[†] this article,[‡] this article,[§] this article** and this article^{††}.]⁴⁷⁰

"RESISTANT TO THEIR OWN EMANCIPATION? COMPLICIT IN THEIR OWN OPPRESSION? SELF-HATING COLLABORATORS? YIKES!" (20 NOVEMBER 2012)

This site tends to attract a lot of disapprobation elsewhere on the net. What do you all think of the discussion linked below?

The article itself is clearly written by someone who has never read this site, judging from the alleged 'quote' she made up (or perhaps it is a third party's idea of Taken In Hand—it is certainly not mine anyway), not to mention the paragraph suggesting that we advocate ... well take a look at this (be warned: it is very sick and twisted):

Taken in Handers practise what they call "consensual non-consent", which basically boils down to physical and sexual chastisement, up to and including rape, as punishment for the woman's transgressions. It apparently doesn't matter if she screams and cries throughout her ordeal, no amount of pleading is going to make the "punishment"

[†] "How do I broach the subject of Taken In Hand with my spouse?" 18 August 2007.

[‡] "How can I persuade him to take control in our relationship?" 1 December 2006.

[§] "He isn't interested in or capable of taking you in hand?" 11 November 2005.

** "Effect positive change by acting as if..." 12 November 2005.

†† "The crooked path to where we are," 8 July 2005.

* [This is an answer to a frequently-asked question: this page is part of the FAQ. Please try to ensure that your post is answering the question or discussing the above post. The question is: **I want us to have a Taken In Hand relationship. How can I persuade my wife?**]

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stop: by dint of the fact that she's in the relationship in the first place she's deemed to have consented to any mistreatment and abuse her husband doles out.

Holy shit!!! Talk about malicious misrepresentation!

Most of the comments following the article are also by people who have not the slightest idea what this site is about (and I don't blame them for not wanting to familiarise themselves with Taken In Hand after reading Cath Elliot's hatchet job on it!), but a couple of posters did politely argue with the nannyng authoritarian feminist line that any woman whose choices in life differ from the authoritarian-feminist-approved ones are thereby self-hating collaborators, resistant to their own emancipation, betraying women in other parts of the world where women are not free, agents of the patriarchy, complicit in their own oppression, irrational, uneducated, and so on and so forth. (Oh for goodness sake! Get a grip, ladies, get a grip.)

Read Cath Elliot's Guardian article and all the comments following it* but please understand that Taken In Hand is absolutely nothing like Cath Elliot portrays it.

Oh, and don't miss Mendoza's laugh-out-loud comment† about the wife getting her chains polished.

If you find stuff like this on the internet, do post about it here, for fun.

If you want to reply to a specific comment from the linked Guardian discussion, click the **share** link next to the comment and paste that link into your post here, or directly quote the comment so we can properly attribute it.

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The Taken In Hand Site Owner and Creator⁴⁷¹

"HOW CAN I DESCRIBE THIS KIND OF RELATIONSHIP WITHOUT SOUNDING WEIRD?" (3 DECEMBER 2012)

How can I describe this kind of relationship—for example, when talking to friends, co-workers or someone I'm dating—without sounding weird or kinky?

Any suggestions, anyone? This is truly a frequently-asked question. More suggested answers would be very welcome. Add comments!

How about this?:

The kind of relationship I personally prefer is one in which the husband is the one wearing the trousers. Most people prefer a strictly equal 50-50 relationship but I tried that kind of relationship and it just didn't work for me [or: but I've never quite seen the appeal of that kind of relationship]. It felt [or would feel] more like a business partnership or a platonic house-share/flatmates/roommates relationship than an intimate relationship. Why be married if the

* See: <<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/jan/28/women-gender?commentpage=all>>

† See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20180727030711/http://www.guardian.co.uk/discussion/commentpermalink/786151>>

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relationship is more like a platonic business relationship?

For me, the husband wearing the trousers in the relationship makes the relationship a lot more exciting. It makes the spouses more aware of themselves as being man and wife rather than business partners or roommates. It's also more fun! Not for everyone, obviously, but I must confess I do find it strangely appealing.

No, I'm not talking about the kind of relationship in which a put-upon down-trodden long-suffering wife serves the every whim of a narcissistic husband. That sounds very dreary/dull/unpleasant. The kind of relationship I'm talking about is one in which the husband wearing the trousers takes care to put his wife and their relationship first.* Putting her and the relationship first is the key to creating a marriage in which the man wears the trousers in a good, healthy and sustainable way.⁴⁷²

"COMMIT TO SOLVING PROBLEMS" (10 DECEMBER 2012)

Human beings are creative. Unlike animals, we are able to create models of problems in our mind, simulations if you will, and then see

around the simulation so that we guess how to exert more control of it. This creative capacity to model and then control our world has caused and will cause us to advance and advance scientifically. We are learning to cooperate better and better with the laws of nature, but never do we completely arrive at complete cooperation with them, because we make mistakes.

The same is true of finding how to relate to one's partner, when we are patient enough. Because we can simulate anything in our minds, we can also simulate the creative mind of our partner. We can guess what will make him or her feel better and will also make us feel better. So both participants in a couple can suggest ways that enable the two to cooperate better, regardless of the problem. We can even change what we like or dislike if we realize that a previous preference is immoral or otherwise mistaken. Since we can change our preferences and change the physical state of the world, no law of nature can prevent us from finding a cooperative state with a partner that each finds preferable to where they started when an argument began. We do not live in zero sum world. It is possible for both spouses in a marriage to gain.

It follows therefore that in a couple committed to solving problems, all arguments can be resolved in a way that both find to be better than the conflicted state that led to the argument, if given enough time. Now, it helps to start a relationship with someone with whom one does not have drastic differences and multiple difficulties solving problems. But

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because we are fundamentally creative beings, even a couple like this could figure out how to work well together with enough time and effort.

If each individual in a couple is profoundly committed to working things out with the other then given enough time, they will! This is easier if we intelligently choose a partner whom we already find very attractive and wonderful, but I have even heard of it working in the case of an arranged marriage.⁴⁷³

"MEN IN TAKEN IN HAND RELATIONSHIPS DON'T FEAR WOMEN" (10 DECEMBER 2012)

Someone on another forum rightly said that husbands in Taken In Hand relationships "are not worried about oneitis and don't dread their wives."

True. We do not worry about oneitis and we don't fear or dread our wives or women in general. There is nothing to fear. Worrying about oneitis is weak. It's defensive.

Women are not the enemy, they are just women. Some in the "Game" community have an exaggerated view of women's power. In fact women are so easy to render powerless, and they *want* to be rendered powerless—by a good man who uses his power in morally good ways. Take and keep a woman firmly but lovingly in hand and she is putty in your hand. Ask any husband in a Taken In Hand marriage.

If you dread or fear women or you have a defensive, negative, critical frame with respect to them, work on

getting stronger. When you are stronger you won't need that defensive frame.⁴⁷⁴

"FINDING A JOYOUS BALANCE" (10 DECEMBER 2012)

I have been reading the postings and articles on Taken In Hand for a couple of years now, but always with a bit of a heavy heart. I would read of these marvelous marriages that had both genuine love and wonderful passion, and I would yearn to have that kind of fully committed love relationship with a truly strong man.

Earlier this year, the man I have waited my whole life to find actually found me. After weeks of giddy falling-in-love energy, and with us clearly moving into what he and I both knew was a life-long commitment, I could see that this amazing, wonderful, very smart man had been in relationships that left him feeling powerless and less like a man and more like a child. I cringed when I heard some of his stories about what he went through with his ex. Wow.

Because this website had given me such a clear idea of what was possible in strong love relationships (more than any book out there!) and because I had become so certain about what I wanted and desperately needed in my life, I made the effort right from the beginning to speak directly to his inner, masculine strength. I looked for, recognized and praised his accomplishments with genuine love. I thanked him every time he took charge of

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anything in our lives, saying how much I appreciated not having to do absolutely everything myself, as had been the case for more than a decade. And I made sure he knew that, despite my professional successes and academic achievements, and despite having served in the Army, I loved how he made me feel fully feminine.

He started out using a lot of humor and joking about "Being The Man," probably because it was just so new to him to be honored as a strong man. So when we shared an especially tender moment together, I softly told him again how much I valued his strength and how protected and cherished he always made me feel. And then I took a deep breath and I told him I knew it was a lot to ask because it was so much responsibility, but that I would really like him to be the head of our household—to be the one in charge in our life together. He responded with an outpouring of love I have never experienced before. We talked for hours about our needs and experiences.

Something must have clicked, because he began to seek out ways to lovingly take charge of things. For instance, instead of my planning our entire road trip next month, as I always had to do in my previous marriage, he's insisted I stay focused on what I'm doing and let him make all the arrangements and plans. I can't describe how thrilled I was! What a gift! I don't care if he does it the way I would have done it—obviously the whole point is to allow him the pleasure of doing it his way and allowing me the pleasure of revel-

ling in his wanting to take care of us. I can't wait to see what he's got cooked up!

Not a day passes that he does not express his abundant love for me and his amazement at how different he feels about this relationship. He is flourishing! Since we've been together, he's been offered a promotion at work, his friends are commenting on how happy he looks all the time, and he is actually caring about his health in a whole new way because he now sees a happy future for himself.

Best of all, having suffered from a "low libido" for at least a decade (which of course only added to his poor self image as a man), he is now a love-making machine! He cannot believe that in his mid-50's, he's now experiencing more sexual desire than he did in his 30s or 40s! And our love making is amazing, because we've brought the Taken In Hand concepts into our bedroom, as well. Nothing is hotter than having a man take full charge of an afternoon of lovemaking!

A relationship that is true to the Taken In Hand concepts is one that brings to both people a sense of joyous balance. There's nothing to argue about if both want the husband to be in charge. A good man will always want and listen to our advice and input, and he may even ask us to make recommendations to him. But in my case, I always add in the reminder that they are just recommendations, that he will always have the final say. He needs that reminder to help him break the old patterns, and to be reassured that

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this really is what I want, day in and day out.

As this year comes to a close, we are filled with a sense of such gratitude and hope, I can't begin to describe it. Thanks to everyone who has posted here over the years. You gave me the education I was unable to find anywhere else—and lessons that have given me a chance at the relationship I have always dreamed of having with a wonderful man.⁴⁷⁵

"If YOU WANT TO BE IN CHARGE LET GO OF ANGER" (18 DECEMBER 2012)

Something about having a taken-in-hand wife makes me feel like working to support her and the family. It's hard to put it into words. You so badly want to take care of a wonderful woman because she trusts you to do so. She does as you say and you in turn just can't bear to disappoint her. It's a matter of pride as much as anything else. You want her to be right in having faith in you.

That is why having a man in charge does not have to imply the disempowerment of women. We, as men in charge, want our women to do well in the same way that when we are the coach of the football team or the leader of our business team, we want our team to do well. Their success is part of our success. Marriage is a team endeavor.

Male dominance is only dangerous when men feel the need to dominate because they are angry at women and don't trust them. Unfortunately, some men, such as men's rights activists, and some dominant men in the BDSM community, actually feel

victimized by women and so want to be in charge in order to prevent women from hurting them. And indeed it may be true that some men have been victimized by some women (and vice-versa).

But approaching a new relationship holding on to fear associated with an old one and with the need to right perceived or actual abuse in the past inevitably leads to asking the new partner to sacrifice, serve and suffer for the sins of the previous woman or women, thus repeating the abuse but now with the man, the former abuse victim, as the victimizer, and the new woman as the victim. This sets up precisely the conditions in which a new victim is created, and the vicious circle is strengthened. That woman whom you are punishing for the abusiveness of a woman or women past, may go on to punish other men for your abuse of her.

Even if a woman (or man) has hurt you in the past, break free. Let it go. Separate yourself psychologically from that abuse. Leave it in the past. Don't blame others for the abuse you have suffered in the past. Don't punish others for abuse for which they have no moral responsibility. Treat people as individuals instead of making global negative judgements about entire classes of individuals. Don't become that which you despise: a bitter, cynical, hate-filled abuser. That is no way to live. It is painful.

A man should only want to take charge in any situation if he believes that his strengths enable him to utilize the creativity of the wife he is in

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charge of to make both her and himself better off.

This desire to take charge of your wife is rooted in respect for your partner's capabilities, not the need to inhibit or hurt them. If you are a man who has abused your power, experiment with finding ways to use your power to make your wife better off. Start putting her and your relationship first—not in a groveling, supplicating, servile way of course, but in a way that makes it more obvious that you care about her. The smile on her face will be plenty worth the effort. And the trust in you that she will develop will give you more power still. No matter what mistakes you have made, you can make changes that make all the difference.

Dominance applied with kindness and love will powerfully engender respect and adoration in your wife. Being in charge can be a tremendously moral and exciting adventure for you both. The more you are able to be firmly in charge but kindly so, the more your wife will respond positively to your leadership, and the more you will enjoy your power over her. Both of you will naturally want to be the best you can be for one another and for yourselves. This striving to be the best for one another is very pleasurable. My beautiful taken-in-hand wife has enabled me to feel that pleasure. I recommend it.⁴⁷⁶

**"SHE'S STILL A GIRL UNDER THE TOUGH
MENSWEAR" (21 DECEMBER 2012)**

My wife often wears pretty, feminine dresses and skirts but she, like some others who have commented on this site, sometimes prefers to wear masculine, tough-guy wear, like her black combats, black turtle-neck and black Dr. Martens. She even buys actual men's clothing.

My wife was reading stuff on the internet about how for women to attract men they have to wear pretty, feminine dresses and skirts, and she was surprised by that, because she's noticed that just as many men appear attracted to her when she's in her tough-guy wear as when she's wearing her very feminine dresses. I have often told her she looks hot when she's in her tough-guy gear, so she asked me why I find it hot whereas according to the internet I should find it a turn-off.

Her tough-guy outfits are attractive to me because they are tight-fitting down to her hips, emphasizing her really narrow waist and very feminine chest. The way clothes shape a woman is really important to me, whether she is wearing something ultra-modest, conservative, girly, or hard-core. I told my wife that unless the woman is wearing menswear that hides her female shape, men know what's underneath all of it. I find it cute and funny when girls try to be all tough and aggressive in their attire, because their femininity can't be hidden by dressing up as a tough guy.

My wife looks so cute in my sweaters too, despite the fact that they are so big for her they swamp her so she has to turn up the sleeves several times. Perhaps they highlight

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the fact that she is much smaller than I?

Why is there this idea that girls need to dress like girls to attract men? Is it that some men feel threatened by a girl dressing up as a tough guy, or is it a myth? Isn't femininity something that shines through the toughest of tough-guy dress-up?

Women, you don't have to just dress in girly ways. If a man is intimidated by that and so does not like you because of it, it tells you more about him than you. Indeed, if you're single, dressing up as a tough guy might even help you to screen out the insecure men from those who will be confident about their ability to handle you.

Now, I have nothing against a sweet summer dress at a July 4th parade. But for a stroll in the town, you can't beat Dr. Martens.⁴⁷⁷

"MEN, SHOW OFF YOUR MUSCLES! (WE LIKE IT MORE THAN YOU THINK!)" [27 FEBRUARY 2013]

In today's world, men don't have much opportunity to showcase their strength to women. While during the Paleolithic era men would, we imagine, demonstrate their physical prowess to their grateful mates every day by fighting and killing massive animals, climbing trees, carrying heavy rocks, wood and water and actively protecting their dwellings from danger, today's men have it, let's say, a little easier. None of the daily activities we do each day to survive are particularly physically difficult. A woman is unlikely to swoon when a man butters a toast or

makes a coffee (unless he does it for her, but that's for a rather different reason) and hunts himself a lunchbox from the fridge before he heads off to sit in his comfy car in order to sit for another eight hours in the office in front of a computer, and then sits some more in front of a TV, flexing his thumbs on the remote. It's not quite the same thrill to see him do that as if he and his pals dragged home, say, a mammoth. Or even a deer.

Even though we live mostly in a physically low-challenge environment, men are still, on average, at least 50% stronger than women, at least where their upper body is concerned. The strongest woman in the world gets easily beaten by a man of average fitness. I watched in fascination this* video. The woman, looking like the female version of The Incredible Hulk, loses three times to rather scrawny-looking men—wins only once on her first try. Yes, we are, physically speaking, the weaker sex, and that's fine. We should never compare ourselves to men in this department—we are just made differently. And we much appreciate knowing that the guy next to us has some muscle power, and that he'd protect us from any threat much better than we could do ourselves. Yet there are so few opportunities for us women to see how much stronger our male counterparts really are that we (at least myself) appreciate even the most modest display of muscle power and physical

* See: <<https://web.archive.org/web/20140328232132/http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MF-YeWnIjfUa>>

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control, such as opening a lid of a tough jar or carrying a heavier grocery bag from the car. Is this why we like men with blue-collar jobs so much? Or men that are good with DIY, or men that don't drive an automatic? Manual jobs are, however, often not the best-paid jobs, so the more educated and wealthier the man, the less likely he is to show his lady any upper-body bulges. And I think we are all missing out as a result, because even though we sport a civilized veneer, we still have our caveman brains that react as strongly to the same stimuli as they did 100,000 years ago. Physical fitness still rules.

So what's the solution for the office-bound man? I think there are more than one might think. Sports, obviously, but pick those that your woman can also participate in, at her own pace, or where she can be a spectator. It doesn't help too much if you just bring home a bag with sweaty trainers and dump it on the floor! She has to see you in action. I fell in love with my man when we decided to go rock-climbing together on an indoor climbing wall. Up till that point, he was only a friend. I was somewhat interested in him, but there were no massive sparks, even though he was kind, very intelligent, funny and a true gent right from the start. But when I saw him climb up an overhang seven meters above me like a monkey while I struggled to even stay put on the wall (even though I am quite fit), boy, did it do wonders for our chemistry! I eventually managed to get stuck at about two meters above ground, and, afraid to jump off, I called him to the

rescue. He swiftly and gracefully climbed down the seven meters and reached out to take me down, holding me firmly as he lowered me onto the floor. Damsel in distress was rescued, and falling head-over-heels. :)

Pick up your woman! Throw her over your shoulder, squeeze her, play-fight with her, pin her down. I've always really wanted all this, but there were not that many men willing to provide these things! Now I feel very lucky to have a partner who is happy to shake me around a bit every day. It's fantastic to be around such a fit and strong man. If your girl is too heavy for this stuff, spank her so that she loses a bit of weight! :) And if you're not fit enough? Well, another excuse to head to the gym. Or to the dance-floor—you don't need to be a weight-lifter to be a strong lead for your lady. You can be eighty years old and if you know your moves and hold her firmly, she will happily follow, relaxing under your control.

You don't have to be too overt with your strength display all the time—even subtle gestures work. I used to have a boyfriend who, whenever he was passing me in a narrow space (say, a doorway), would hold me firmly for a brief moment just to steady me as he moved along. It was a small gesture, but the meaning of it was big: I've got you, you are safe. This attitude permeated the relationship, most of the time, and I loved him very much. Why we split up is another story, but while it lasted, I definitely felt “taken in hand”.⁴⁷⁸

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"HE TOOK ME IN HAND BY LETTING ME FLY" (7 JULY 2013)

I first came across this site about 3 years ago and just recently have started reading the articles on here again, coinciding really with the change in the relations between my husband and me back to a more taken in hand dynamic, although on reflection I don't think it ever really went away, and this is what I would like to explain...

Since the start of our relationship ten years ago, my husband has always 'worn the trousers' just quite naturally, that is the kind of person he is and that is what I wanted too. When our first child came along, I started chomping at the bit as it were, I suddenly found myself wanting to be in charge, especially with our son and more generally, I had a sense that I could run everything better than my husband and I should be the one in charge.

One morning I was giving my husband a lecture about food for our baby son - I had had a bit of a lie-in and my partner had gotten up with our son and given him breakfast but not what I would have given him. I let him know about this quite patronisingly, and he gave me a warning look, but I just carried on in full flow, convinced that he had no idea what he was talking about and that I must be completely right and he needed to hear what I was saying. He was furious - there had been a lot of this going on around that time.

He swiftly came across and tried to steer me upstairs to nip it in the bud and I resisted fiercely. he got me into

the hallway and started to spank me and I wriggled away and upstairs, attempting to block his entry to the bedroom, but he got up the stairs too quick and he came in and put me over his knee and something just clicked in my head, I went into the 'purple zone' as my partner calls it, and I decided that categorically no I would not accept this, would not accept his right to authority over me, and I struggled ferociously. He sensed that I was not going to allow this spanking and backed off, just long enough that I ran off down the stairs and went to leave the house. I had such a head of steam on me, I was only wearing my dressing gown and knickers for heaven's sake and my husband tried to stop me leaving because of this fact, but only succeeded in de-robing me just as I was going out of the door, and so there I was on a busy city street with all the neighbours off to work, them looking over having heard the commotion as well!!!

Well that moment changed EVERYTHING. My husband backed completely away from any kind of authority in our relationship - 'you want to be in charge' he said, 'well you go for it. Our family means more to me so we'll do this, go for it, you make all the decisions then.' And for nearly two years I did. The power dynamics in our relationship fundamentally changed to the point where I was taking the lead, and tyrannical too was that leadership. It felt like a complete flip in our marriage, although not in our love-making dynamics, and the whole experience was a nightmare for us

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both, led to much unhappiness and lack of closeness.

My husband said he thought that I needed to go through this, the point I was at in my life, having recently had kids, that I needed to explore this side of myself, evidently, as I was resisting to the point of absolute refusal, that he had to let me go and come back of my own accord.

But here's the nub - he still was in charge really - it was he who had allowed me to be in a position to make the decisions, and he made clear that I would deal with the consequences of these decisions. He supported me, he complied, he went along with things even when he thought it was a bad idea. I didn't do a bad job of things, kept home, family and finances afloat, kept up my share of work on the business, went back to work, thought of myself as the multi-tasker extraordinaire, but I was suffering and so was J.

I was insisting on doing everything single-handedly trying to prove myself that I was right to be in charge, refusing help from everyone, and in the end I burnt out. My health suffered quite badly, my husband had to take charge again for a little while as I was in hospital and when I came out, and the relief of his leadership was overwhelming. All I could think was what has been going on these past two years, why have I been steering the ship exactly, we've nearly run aground.

I talked to J about this, he held me tight and said softly, 'I tried to tell you but you were determined to go and find out for yourself, I thought you needed to see for yourself, that's

why I didn't stop you.' And he was right. I needed to go through the looking glass and I am grateful that he remained so patient with me during that time, I don't even want to go into details but needless to say I was horrendous, I belittled him, ignored his views, threatened him that I would kick him out if he put up resistance to my decisions - this man, if you knew him you'd know how absurd it was - I can't believe what I tried to do to him, this man whose quite commanding authority is respected by everyone I've ever seen him interact with, who is so considerate and thoughtful, takes decisions seriously, takes into account others' views, and is usually right about most things - this man allowing himself to be treated like this by me, because he loves me and felt I needed to go through it, waiting patiently for me to come to my senses.

When I asked him if he would consider taking the helm again, we talked for days about the past few years, what happened, he never attached any blame to me, showed no resentment, if he had done that to me, would I have had the equanimity to have responded like he did? - I know I wouldn't have, I would have been out of there, would have quite rightly seen him as a tyrant, thought of him as a bully, for I was over those two years.

But he stayed, because he loves me and our family and he would do anything for us, even if it was hell on earth for him, which those two years had been and because, despite my behaviour, he had faith in me that I would realise this wasn't

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working, and indeed I realised it several months before the crisis when I got ill, but it took that crisis for me to finally admit it.

I feel so lucky that he was so understanding, that he has taken back the helm with such calmness and kindness, with a soft touch, but firm and determined to steer us from the rocky ground and we're now in calmer seas, I feel safe and secure and loved and wanted, and he does too, we did have to go through those two years of madness, he did 'tame' me in the end, he took me in hand, but not perhaps in the way that either of us would have anticipated.⁴⁷⁹

"RELINQUISHING CONTROL CAN BE VERY POWERFUL" (23 JULY 2013)

Through my giving my husband control in our relationship, Mr Lucky feels ownership of our relationship. He feels like it is up to him to make it flourish. Instead of fighting against me, he wants to take care of and nurture me. To help me be the best that I can be. The health of our relationship is a direct reflection of the quality of his leadership. He is constantly amazing me with his insights and wisdom and his consistent drive to be his best self. To prove to me that he is worthy of my trust and admiration and that my decision to let him lead was the right decision. Heady stuff.

Even though it might sound counter-intuitive, relinquishing control can actually make it more likely that your needs will be met, that your opinions will be considered and that your relationship will flourish.

If a man is not constantly fighting you for leadership, but feels that he IS the leader in your relationship that frees him up to be generous.

In my experience it is way more fun and satisfying for all involved!⁴⁸⁰

"HOW ARE WE EQUAL?" (24 JULY 2013)

How are husband and wife equal in a taken-in-hand relationship? In what senses are we equal? Every taken-in-hand relationship is different of course, but what do you mean when you say (if you say and believe) you and your spouse are equal?⁴⁸¹

"JAMES BOND AND TAKEN IN HAND" (19 AUGUST 2013)

Hello,

My husband and I are new to this site and it has transformed our life together. We are in our mid 40s and married 14 years. We are much more free, lively and connected now. Through this site I feel I have found my "tribes women" and that I am not alone. Bringing this site to my husband is opening up a side of him that is deeply satisfying to both of us.

One of the many fun parts of exploring the Taken in Hand side of my life has been rediscovering books, movies etc. that first excited me as an adolescent just emerging into sensual life -- the life of adult relationships. I was and am attracted to strong male led relationships. And I thought I was weird until just a few months ago.

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I read the entire James Bond series when I was 12 or 13 years old. I devoured them voraciously, and wondered what kind of strange girl I was to crave this masculine energy? I figured it was something that I would have to "get over" in order to be normal.

I cast aside that thought and decided to reconnect to my young me and see what she was so excited by. I picked them up again about a month ago and found to my delight that the books reveal a much different man than the movies. Bond is strong, protective, romantic and firm. He is flawed, but lovable. The women he is attracted to are also strong, connected to nature, intelligent and resourceful. He is particularly drawn to "a bird with a wing down."

I find my husband stands up quite well to Bond in that he is able to negotiate the real life challenges of fatherhood and husband-ing that elude the fiction hero.

Anyone else have thoughts on James Bond or any other heroes that catch our fancy as the Taken in Hand Tribe?⁴⁸²

"ONE SEXY MOMMA" (25 AUGUST 2013)

My husband's good at making me feel very sexy as the mother of his child, and for me, this is preferable to imagining wife and mother as two far-flung roles to shuttle between. I am not the kind of person who can wait for date night or even tonight, or shove away or push down what is essential to myself, or divide my heart as if it's a steak. I am his wife

and our daughter's mother at once always.

How does my husband make me one sexy momma? Mostly with lots of sex, but also he doesn't treat me like I'm his mother while some men do treat their wives that way. And he asks casually, "Have you been a good mother?" His eyes show he knows that I have, so he asks to make me feel good and under his authority and for the pleasure of hearing all about it.⁴⁸³

"NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION" (4 SEPTEMBER 2013)

To me, one of the most intriguing aspects of Taken In Hand relationships is the lack of psychological violence, even when relationships feature spanking and/or other physical dominance. By acknowledging my need for a male-led relationship, my husband and I emerged from the subtle violence of denying ourselves, to a delightful adventure.

My discovery of Taken In Hand came from applying non-violent communication to myself. I had become interested in Marshall Rosenberg and watched YouTube videos of his work. I was impressed by his promise that by using the principles of non-violent communication, I would learn to never hear an insult or criticism again, only the pleas of others for their needs to be met. It changed my perspective. I started to listen for the needs embedded in the messages that came to me from others. It was a revelation.

Rosenberg said to listen for what is alive in others, and to recognize the

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truth within the need being expressed. That question "what is alive right now" is essential to empathy. When someone's need is heard and respected, it builds a bridge to understanding and resolution of conflict.

I decided to ask the question to myself, and listen to the answer. What I found alive in me was my desire for my husband to take me in hand physically. Instead of burying this desire under a pile of judgments, I got up the nerve to share the news with my husband. I started poking around on the internet and found this site.

How ironic. By giving up on the psychological violence of self judge-

ment, and being willing to share my need with Patrick, it opened me up to the fulfillment of my deep longings. We are building a new relationship that openly cherishes my need for physical dominance and for his leadership. I went from thinking of myself as crazy to embracing what is alive in me. Life has flowed into our marriage.

Some of the things I crave are going to be a process. I can't demand my husband suddenly be dominant in the way I want him to be. That will not work. I am so grateful for the stories of others on this site to help me relax into what our process will be.⁴⁸⁴

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